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THE GOSPEL OF OPPORTUNITY

CHARLES E. SCHOFIELD



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THE GOSPEL OF OPPORTUNITY

VENTURES IN THE INTERPRETATION
OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS

BY
CHARLES E. SCHOFIELD



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To
MY WIFE

WHOSE NEVER-FAILING LOVE
AND UNDERSTANDING HAVE
BEEN THE INSPIRATION OF
ALL THAT IS BEST IN MY
MINISTRY

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FOREWORD

IN preparing these sermons I have made no attempt to develop a systematic discussion of an elaborate theme. The sermons have been preached on various occasions to different congregations in the course of the past five years of my ministry. They are simply "Ventures in the Interpretation of the Gospel of Jesus." Insofar as the message that we preach is truly a "Gospel"—"Good News"—it is the proclamation of the undreamed-of possibilities of human life through the grace of God in Christ. In the face of a mood of fatalistic pessimism that characterizes large areas of popular thinking—a mood that nourishes the cynical doubt of the possibility of any genuine human spiritual attainment—the gospel of Jesus confronts us with an inescapable, imperious command to proclaim the glad tidings of the *human possibilities* of the life that is "hid with Christ in God."

Casper, Wyoming, March 27, 1926.

I

HUMAN POSSIBILITIES

"Who then can possibly be saved?" "The promise is meant for you and for your children and *for all who are far off, for anyone whom the Lord our God may call to himself.*"

We cannot escape the conviction that Jesus believed that there never lived a man so vile but that he could still be redeemed by the grace of God.

I

HUMAN POSSIBILITIES

"Who then can possibly be saved?"—*Matt. 19. 25.*
"The promise is meant for you and for your children
and for all who are far off, for anyone whom the Lord
our God may call to himself."—*Acts 2. 39.*¹

ONE day in June Robert Browning was crossing the Square of San Lorenzo in Florence, Italy. His eye was attracted by a stall where a second-hand dealer had displayed his wares. There, in a table of old books, all jumbled together, he picked out a faded volume, bound in vellum. Part of the pages were in print and part in manuscript. It was a transcript of the evidence in a murder case that had been tried in Rome two hundred years before. Can you imagine anything any drier or more unpromising than a court record two centuries old? The poet took the crude ore in that old musty volume, fused it in the fires of his poetic genius and coined that marvelous poem, "The Ring and the Book," one of the greatest poems that human mind has ever conceived. A thousand other folk had thumbed

¹James Moffatt, *The New Testament, A New Translation.*

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over the contents of that shelf of frayed and faded books. The vision of the poet discovered the glory hidden between those stained and tattered pages, and revealed it to the world.

It is something like that that Jesus has done for human life. In his latest book on *The Modern Use of the Bible* Harry Emerson Fosdick observes that "this is a hard world in which to believe at all that forgiveness and transformation of life are possible."² There have always been men who have seen visions and dreamed dreams of better days. And always we greet their visions and laugh at their dreams as mere ideals. I have been leading a little discussion class in the Labor College the past couple of months. We have been studying some of the economic problems of modern life. We have been talking about the evils of poverty and wasteful luxury; the inequalities in the distribution of life's material goods; the suspicion and distrust that characterizes the relations of so many laboring men and their employers. We have been raising the question as to whether there is any solution for these problems; whether there may be a way by which conditions may be made more equitable, and the relations between workingmen and their employers be placed upon a bet-

²Page 226. The Macmillan Company, publishers. Used by permission.

ter basis. And always we come up against this difficulty: The trouble is in human nature. Men are selfish. Men nourish hatred and suspicion. Men are greedy. Men are callous toward their fellows. The only possible way in which poverty can be alleviated, wasteful luxury be transformed into useful service, and hatred supplanted by a spirit of brotherhood and cooperation, is by the bringing of a new spirit into human life, the transformation of human nature. And one man said, just a few weeks ago: "What's the use of us wasting our time talking about these things? You can't change human nature."

That was the question that was puzzling the disciples. They had been talking over with Jesus some of the economic problems of their day. They had just parted company with a man who wanted to make money worse than he wanted God. They had been standing face to face with stark human selfishness and greed. And Jesus had not minimized the problem. Jesus never tried to understate the difficulties that an honest man must reckon with when he turns toward God. He rather magnified the difficulty. Did you ever try to look through a telescope or a pair of opera glasses wrong end to? Everything you look at is pushed far away from you. It appears just as much

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smaller as it would appear larger if you were looking through the glass in the right way. Some of us are inclined to look at our moral problems in that way. But that was never Jesus' way. He turned the microscope upon every human frailty, and magnified it until we could see it distinctly in all of its hideous proportions. Jesus saw human sin in all of its unloveliness. The disciples were filled with dismay. "Who then can possibly be saved?" they cried. The answer of Jesus struck directly to the heart of the whole problem of salvation. "This is impossible for men, but anything is possible for God."³

I

Suppose we look at some of the folks that Jesus believed were salvable. Suppose that you had been living in Palestine at the same time as Jesus, and suppose you should have been asked to select the twelve men whom you would think fittest to lead a movement for religious reform. Where would you have gone to make your selections? Would you have passed by the Temple with its priests, trained from childhood in the observance of religious rites, steeped in the atmosphere of generations of public piety? Would you have turned away

³ Matt. 19. 26 (Moffatt).

from the whole class of rabbis, men who had been taught in the schools in the Temple porches, men who had given a lifetime to a study of the Scriptures? Would you have thought to look down by the water front in Capernaum? Would you have picked out a little group of rough-handed, leather-faced, hard-voiced fishermen for disciples? Would you have invited a hated grafting, self-centered tax-collector like Matthew to be numbered among the twelve? Suppose you were asked to pick out twelve men from the city of Pueblo who would become the leaders in a movement for a religious awakening. Where would you go to look for them? Would you go to the steel works and look for them among the throngs of smoke-grimed, grease-smeared faces that come pouring out when the mill changes shifts? Would you go into one of the banks of this city and pick out a man whose sole purpose in life hitherto has been to make money? Yet Jesus picked out just that very sort of men and invited them to become his disciples.

One day they brought a woman of the streets before him. They asked him what he thought should be done with such a notorious sinner. You know what most people think of the chance for reformation for such a woman as

that? You know what attitude society in general always takes toward anyone who has lived such an evil life? And you remember what Jesus finally said to that woman—"Go and sin no more." That was not a mere idle word of dismissal. It was a charter of moral liberation. It was an invitation to spiritual conquest. Jesus meant exactly what he said. He believed that even a woman as low as that could be saved for clean and holy living.

One day the elders of the Jewish Church in Jerusalem expelled a man from the church. He was so obstinate in his refusal to follow their leadership, to yield to their discipline, and to accept their instruction, that they decided that he was hopeless. And they cast him out. Immediately, when Jesus heard about it, he hunted up that man to tell him that the doors of opportunity were not all closed. He believed that God could make a new man of him. He believed that the man could be saved.

Jesus went down through the slums of the city. He saw squalor and want and suffering and poverty. He saw vice in all of its filth and all of its hideousness. He saw selfishness and avarice and greed. But underneath all these garments of wretchedness he saw men and women toiling endlessly at their tasks. He

saw the wretched hovels in which whole families existed. He saw life stripped of everything lovely and worth while, life reduced to the bare level of hand-to-mouth existence. He saw all the miserable, petty selfishness that so often characterizes life in a small community. But everywhere he saw the soil of human souls overrun with weeds of selfishness and sin, soil which when cultivated could be made to blossom with holiness like the Garden of the Lord. He came down by the seaside and listened to the sin-blistered language of the fishermen; and he believed that these same tongues which that day blasphemed could be taught to sing the praises of God. He went up by the work shops and factories where men were toiling at hard manual tasks. He saw the oppression of the taskmaster; the hard, bitter rebellion of the laborer; the envy of poverty and the insolent pride of wealth. But he saw more than this. He saw likewise men whose lives could be transformed until they should become the expressions of brotherhood and cooperation. Jesus went up into the Capital City. He saw all the empty pomp and display of luxurious power. He saw the venality and petty corruption that has been the perennial curse of political life. He saw the callous cruelty with which the rich man rode his cause roughshod

over the cause of the poor. But Jesus saw more than that. He saw in even the most vicious of these men something that reminded him strangely of the heavenly Father.

There are many strange and inexplicable things about Jesus. But the strangest and most inexplicable of all is his faith in the possibilities of human life. No man who ever lived had better reason to despair of men. No one was ever so bitterly and maliciously misunderstood. No one was ever so virulently hated. No one was ever so deliberately maligned. No one ever met such obstinate and persistent rebuffs. No one ever had to face the sheer brutal, selfish hideousness of human sin like Jesus faced it. And yet almost the dying words of Jesus were a prayer for forgiveness for those who were so fiendishly torturing his body, and a promise of eternal life to a murderer who was dying on a scaffold. *We cannot escape the conviction that Jesus believed that there never lived a man so vile but that he could still be redeemed by the grace of God.* And that, my friends, is the hope of the gospel.

II

It is true, as Fosdick said, that "this is a hard world in which to believe at all that forgiveness and transformation of life are pos-

sible." The world is full of men and women who are living lives of malignant evil. There are merchants who cheat and lie. There are lawyers who recognize no scruple. There are physicians without sympathy or conscience. There are teachers who are moral lepers. There are mothers who consider the coming of children a personal grievance. There are husbands who are untrue to their wives. There are poor will-bound wretches who are the slaves of passion and habit. There are tongues that are seared with malicious gossip. There are miserly souls whose fingers have stiffened with grasping and holding until they seem to have lost the power to open them in benevolence or kindness. There are souls so hardened and calloused in sin that no appeal to a higher life seems to have power to move them.

All that is true. But that is not all of the story. On the other hand there is God. On the other hand there is Jesus, who absolutely refused ever to give up faith in the salvability of men and women. On the other hand there is the picture of the father of the prodigal, running in haste to meet the returning wanderer with the kiss of forgiveness. On the other hand there is infinite love and compassion, a yearning passion to redeem that would gladly accept the cross rather than fail to win men.

On the other hand there is the ever-multiplying story of human redemption. We must look at Jesus as well as at the pitiful story of human failure and sin, if we would know the whole of God's gospel. And *Jesus forever believes that every man can be saved.*

There is no hope in this world apart from this faith of Jesus. That is what the gospel is about. That is what makes it a gospel, a "glad tidings of great joy," the story of the coming into the world of a Saviour. That is what you and I must believe, or we have not the mind of Christ. We must learn to see in the life of every man, no matter how unlovely may be the outward appearance, the hidden glory of holiness. We must learn to believe that every man and woman we meet, every man and woman we know, can be saved by the grace of God. If I did not believe that to be true, I would never preach another sermon as long as I live. That is absolutely all that I have to preach about. *That is the whole of the gospel.*

When I say this I am not talking of speculation or theory. I am talking of what I have seen demonstrated in human experience. Nor need we go as far back as the days of Jesus' earthly life. The power of God is as mighty to save to-day as ever it was in any earlier age. I have known of a man who was so thoroughly

a slave of profanity that he could not put together a single sentence without an oath in it. He cursed in every casual conversation. He swore in his dreams and blasphemed when he talked in his sleep. He heard the call of the gospel and yielded his heart to God. The first time that he attempted to testify he spoke about his besetting sin, and then, before he realized what he was doing, he broke out into profanity and started to curse the evil habit that had possessed him. That was the last time that anyone ever heard that man swear. From that hour to the day of his death he never allowed a profane word to pass his lips. The power of Jesus completely cleansed his speech and taught his lips a new language.

I know a woman who when a girl began to live an unclean life. For several years she continued her immoral practices. Then there came a change in her life. She broke completely with the old ways of living. She fell in love with a fine young man in the community. Before they were married she told him the whole pitiful, tragic story. And his was a love that was deep enough to forgive. Two sweet little children have come to bless their home. In all the land there is not anywhere a happier home than theirs.

I knew a man who was one of the most bril-

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liant and able lawyers who ever pleaded a case before the Colorado bar. For more than fifty years he was a proud and boastful unbeliever. He organized a club of men who thought as he did and who met regularly to drink and gamble. His speech was as foul as the lingo of a livery stable bum. He went out of his way to scoff at God and religion. Then, after he was more than sixty years of age; when all of the habits of life are usually thought to be irrevocably fixed and determined; when the gray was streaking his temples, and years had driven their furrows across his forehead—this man found God. He frankly and openly, before the whole community, confessed his sins and acknowledged Christ. He went to the next meeting of the club that he had organized and told them that he was through with that sort of life forever, and pleaded with his former companions to follow his example. He wrote a little book, which he called *Evidence*, and had it published at his own expense. In this book he marshaled all of the evidence that his finely trained legal mind could assemble in defense of faith in God and the gospel of Jesus. I shall never forget the last time that I saw him. He came up to shake me by the hand at the close of a preaching service. His face was fairly radiant with

the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God" that he, like Paul, had seen "in the face of Jesus Christ."

My brethren, that is the gospel we believe. That is the gospel we preach. "The promise is meant for you and for your children and *for all who are far off, for anyone whom the Lord our God may call to himself.*"

II

SPIRITUAL PARASITES

"Have salt in yourselves."

The man or woman who is living in any community and trying to live a clean and honorable life, and who is making no personal contribution to the maintenance and strengthening of the organizations that are promoting Christian living in that community is a *spiritual parasite*.

II

SPIRITUAL PARASITES

Mark 9. 33-50

"Have salt in yourselves."—*Mark 9. 50.*

ONE summer, several years ago, we visited my father, who lives in southern California. While we were there we frequently saw orange groves in which every tree was completely covered by an immense canvas bag, the open end of which was staked down securely to the ground around the foot of the tree. Upon inquiry I learned that these trees were being fumigated to destroy the scale insects that prey upon the orange trees. These bags were being filled with the deadly fumes of hydrocyanic acid gas to destroy the devastating insects. Those little parasites, if unrestrained, would speedily destroy all of the orange groves in California. And then you and I and millions more all over this land would have to do without our orange for breakfast.

Something over a year ago a man who lived near where my father lives in California did a very strange thing. He had a fine, large herd

of pure-bred Holstein cows. Many of them had been prize-winners at stock shows and were worth thousands of dollars. Yet one day this man dug an immense trench and then drove that fine herd of cows down into the trench and shot them, every one. The reason for this was that he had discovered that a very tiny animal organism had attacked that herd of cows. It was a parasite that burrowed into the hoofs and into the tender membranes of the mouths of the cattle and produced the dreaded, deadly "foot and mouth disease." In less than ten months, last year,¹ that little parasite, so tiny that it was with great difficulty that it was discovered even by a microscope, had caused the destruction of cattle and other property in California and Texas aggregating nearly five million dollars in value.

One day while I was attending school in the city of Boston a man accosted me on the street. He told me that he was out of work and hungry, and asked me for some money. There is in Boston a Methodist church located down in the heart of the most congested slums that specializes in trying to help that kind of men and women. They have a cafeteria and a lodging house in the church plant. They take

¹1924.

in men and women who are down and out, give them a bath, clean clothes, wholesome food, a place to sleep and then give them work so that they can support themselves with self-respect. If they desire it, they are given an opportunity to learn almost any trade at which men and women work; and then, when they are ready, they are found a job before they leave the care of the church. I told this man who asked me for money to come with me and I would take him to a place where he could get a good square meal, and, if he had no place to stay, a comfortable bed and an opportunity to work. He began to hesitate and stammer and finally he said that he had just thought of a friend of his who ran a lunch stand not far away and he thought he could get a hand-out there. Then he was off.

That man had not told me the truth. He wasn't worried because he didn't have a job. He was really very much more worried for fear he might find one. He was just one of an army of between seventy-five and one hundred thousand men who are living in this country at the expense of others. These vagrants who seldom work, and who never want to work, are costing the communities of the United States half a million dollars every week just to keep them alive. They are social parasites.

In speaking of these men who live in continual idleness, I do not mean to include the great host of honest workers who are idle because they can find no work to do. Between 1902 and 1917, for fifteen years, there was an average of nearly two million workers out of work all of the time here in the United States. Those are the men who are subject to shifting seasonal demands for labor. They are not parasites. They are the victims of our unchristian economic system. They present us with a problem which we must solve before we can legitimately call ours a Christian civilization.

I am thinking of the men who do not want to work, the men who live, by deliberate choice, at the expense of other men. And I am thinking of other men than these poor, ragged, wandering tramps. I am thinking of a whole host of men who have inherited or in some way come into the possession of enough wealth to make them independent of anxiety for subsistence, and who deliberately choose to live lives of wasteful luxury and extravagance, gratifying their pleasures upon the fruit of the toil of other men. *Any man or woman whose life is making no real contribution to the human welfare of the community in which they live is a human parasite.*

I

The other day, as I was reading this ninth chapter of the Gospel of Mark, I came upon the verse that I have selected as the text for our thought this morning. "Have salt in yourselves," said Jesus. We need not now enter into a discussion of the use of salt in the old sacrificial ritual, nor of the particular significance of Jesus' use of the word here, and in other connections, in relation to the Christian life. Here is the point about this verse that struck me full in the face. I want you to think about it with me this morning. Jesus was evidently referring to something that is vitally essential to every worth-while life. He has just been commenting on some of the ways in which men and women evade the moral responsibility of worthy living. He is insisting that *you and I ought never to be content to depend upon others for that saving grace of Christian influence that alone can make any community a decent and a wholesome place in which to live.* He is insisting that you and I must face our own individual personal responsibility for the making of this world that which it ought to be. That is to say, we must possess that vital personal faith and accept the responsibility which its possession inevitably

entails of conscious loyalty to the cause of Jesus Christ.

"Have salt in yourselves," says Jesus. I want to raise the question in your minds this morning, of whether you and I are not in danger of becoming *spiritual parasites*.

II

To begin with we had better have a definition of what we mean by "parasite." One dictionary definition is: "A living organism that lives on some other organism from which it derives its nourishment."¹ That is what the orange scale insect does. That is what the parasite that causes the "foot and mouth disease" in cattle does. That is what the idle vagrant, both rich and poor, is doing. Jesus is raising the question as to whether or no there may be men and women who are doing that same thing in a spiritual way. He is insisting that *no human spirit is justified in depending upon some other person for his spiritual nourishment*. "Have salt in yourselves," says Jesus.

I have not been in this city very long. It would ill become me to begin to criticize anyone who lives here or anything that you are doing until I have become better acquainted

¹ Reprinted from the *New Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, by permission of Funk & Wagnalls, publishers.

and can know whereof I speak. But I am sure that you will permit me to tell you of some folks whom I have known some other places. And if by chance my description happens to resemble some good friend of yours, then we shall have to conclude that human nature in Casper is not very different from human nature somewhere else.

I knew a man in a town in Nebraska who told me the very first time that I spoke to him: "I may as well tell you right now that we are not church people. I pay my debts. I try to live right. In fact, there are a lot of people in the church who do some things that I wouldn't stoop to do. I don't make any pretense of being a Christian, but I think I am living as good a life as the average in this community anyway." I wonder if you happen to know my friend? Or maybe you have somewhere met a distant cousin of his, or a twin brother.

I want you to think about this man's life a bit. Two things about him I want to call to your attention. To begin with he had some very fine ideals. I want frankly to recognize that at the start. What he said about some church members doing some things which he would not do was absolutely true. He did pay his debts. He was honored and respected

by everyone in town. He lived a life that was above the average for clean and moral living. He was interested in community affairs. He gave rather generously to charitable enterprises. But right here is the point that he did not see. These very fine ideals, these stalwart standards of personal living that were the very bulwark of his character, they were directly the result of Christian teaching. He got them from two sources. One was from the influence and teaching of a mother and father who were loyal followers of Jesus Christ. The other was from the common standards of the average community here in America, which are saturated with Christian ideas and Christian ideals.

And, furthermore, my friend was able to maintain those standards in his own personal life, largely, because the total influence of the community environment in which his life was being lived was continually strengthening and encouraging those ideals. Here was a man who owed everything in which he took pride—his ideals, his standing in the community, his record for clean living and generous sympathy with every worthy cause, his very character itself—to the presence in the community of an organization whose sole purpose is to cultivate and perpetuate the ideals and the teach-

ings of Jesus Christ. He was living upon that organization. He had drawn his very life from the church and was maintaining his moral integrity from the never-ceasing flow of spiritual nourishment with which the church was constantly enriching the life of the community. And yet he was steadfastly refusing to place his personal influence back of that organization to which he owed everything that was worth while. He was making no personal contribution to that which alone made life in that community worth while. What else could we call my friend but a *spiritual parasite*, an organism that was living upon and drawing nourishment from another organism to which it made no personal contribution. "Have salt in yourselves," said Jesus.

Take another angle of my friend's life in that community. He was a business man. He ran a store and did a considerable business, largely on credit. He was absolutely dependent for the success of his business enterprise upon the honor, the reliability, the honesty of the men and women in that community. He locked up his store every evening and went home to sleep without anxiety. There wasn't a constable or a police officer nor a justice of the peace within seven miles of his store. He trusted for the security of his possessions to

the simple character of the people in that town.

Now, it may be that the church was not responsible for the security of my friend's possessions and the prosperity of his business. But here is a known result. He was prosperous, and his person and property were unmo-
lested from one year's end to the next. When we are looking for the cause of such a known result the best way to proceed is to eliminate the various conditions that obtained in the given situation and see if we can discover the cause of the effects we have observed. We want to know whether the church has anything to do with this situation or not.

Suppose we compare that community with other communities where the influence of the church is not in evidence. I do not know what moral and economic conditions obtain out in the oil fields in this vicinity, or what conditions may have obtained there in the early days of the oil development before Christian influences had begun to make any impression upon character and life there. But I know what conditions have existed in other oil fields in the days of sudden expansion. I know what conditions have existed in mining camps and in construction camps, and in frontier settlements, before the church had come

to make its presence felt. And I know this, that, if you take out of this fair city every church organization and every form of Christian activity, and absolutely prohibit its reinstatement for a period of just ten years, half of the men who are doing business down on the street will move out of town. You wouldn't live in the kind of a town that this town would become. *The man or woman who is living in any community and trying to live a clean and honorable life and who is making no personal contribution to the maintenance and strengthening of the organizations that are promoting Christian living in that community is a spiritual parasite.* "Have salt in yourselves," said Jesus.

III

Let me introduce you to another of my friends. One day, while I was college pastor in the Agricultural College in Fort Collins, Colorado, the minister of the Methodist Church there asked me to help him out by calling on some folks whom he did not have time to reach at once. One place where I called the woman said to me, "We are members of the Methodist Church back in Missouri. We were just about the biggest workers in the church. My husband was a steward and a

trustee. I was president of the Aid Society and taught in the Sunday school. It seemed like we were always working at something for the church. So when we came out here we decided that we wouldn't transfer our membership. We felt like we had done enough church work for a while. We are going to take a little vacation and let someone else do the work. So we don't care to have our membership transferred just now." Perhaps you have met some of the other members of the family to which this good sister belonged.

Let us try to do a little straight hard thinking right at this point. I believe that there is a good deal of confused and superficial thinking about this whole matter of church membership, and the transfer of membership from one congregation to another. Some people talk about transferring their membership as if it were as difficult a task as it was for Joshua to command the sun to stand still. They refer to the matter of moving their membership from some congregation a thousand miles away and uniting with a congregation where they are living, as if it were as solemn an occasion as amending the Constitution of the United States. Now, frankly, I have never been able to understand that point of view.

What is there about a name upon a par-

ticular church record that is so portentous a matter anyway? A mere name upon a record is only so much spilled and blotted ink unless you are there in person with your active participation in the life and worship of that congregation. A name is meaningless unless it represents an individual who is making some real personal contribution to the enrichment of the life of the church with which he is connected. I must confess that *I always begin to question the real sincerity of a profession of faith in Christ that can be satisfied with such long-distance absentee relationship with the Church of Christ.* I have noticed this, that when a young man falls in love with a young woman, if his love is genuine, he is not satisfied to write his name in her autograph album with some romantic sentiment. He is eager every day to bring some new testimonial of his affection. He can never find enough things to do for her. He is always looking for some new way of showing her how much he cares for her. And, if you ever really fall in love with Jesus Christ, I know that you will never be satisfied just to have your name on some old musty church record somewhere a thousand miles away. You will never find yourself thinking: "Well, I have done enough for Christ now. I will take a vacation for a

while." You will forever be seeking some more effective way of serving him. You will be eager to align yourself with other men and women who are working to realize his purposes. And when you move to some new town you will not wait for months and years for some preacher man to come and hunt you up. At your first opportunity you will find your way to the house of God. And you will find the preacher and say to him, "I want to be at work for Christ." Isn't that what anyone would do who really loves our Master Jesus? "Have salt in yourselves," said Jesus.

Take another look at the position in which this woman was standing. There she was, a professed follower of Jesus Christ. Her life had been enriched and blessed by the experience of Christian faith. She had come to that town to live so that her boy and girl could go to college. And she had brought them to that particular town, in part, because that town was known to be a clean and wholesome town in which young people could live and go to school. It was a town that had been made and kept clean and wholesome by the strength and spiritual power of the churches that were builded there. This woman came into that community because of what it had to offer her and hers. And yet she was unwilling to make

any personal contribution to that by which she herself was to be enriched and blessed. What can we say of men and women who come into a community and make their home there, enjoying the opportunities that are in part the result of the presence and vigorous life of Christian organizations there, and yet are unwilling to invest their own personal services in making those organizations yet more effective for the cause of Christ? Surely no one who truly loves the Lord will be content to be a *spiritual parasite*. "Have salt in yourselves," said Jesus.

IV

There is still another class of folks that I have known that I am afraid ought justly to be classed with these *spiritual parasites*. Perhaps I can leave it with you to make the application of these words of Jesus to your own lives. I wonder, are we ever tempted to rest content with a mere formal profession of Christian faith? Is it ever true that our membership in the church becomes little more than the bare fact that our names are inscribed on the records of the organization? Are we ever tempted to slip out from under the burden of personal responsibility that membership in a Christian church ought to carry with it? Are

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we inclined to be content to let someone else carry on the work of the church while we take our ease and simply enjoy the hours of worship and the social and recreational opportunities that the church affords? And whenever you or I are satisfied simply to receive, simply to be entertained, or taught, or inspired, simply to sit passively and await the ministry of the church; whenever we fail to attempt to make some genuine personal contribution through our own consecration and through our own personal effort to the life of the church, what are we but *spiritual parasites*?

Jesus is the most inexorable Commander that the souls of men have ever owned. He will never be content with a half-hearted allegiance or a divided sovereignty. "He that is not with me is against me." "He that would come after me, let him take up his cross." But, Ah! the world has never known so tenderly winsome a lover as Jesus. It is his love that is the author of his insistent demand for complete consecration. *Love neither knows nor desires any division of loyalty. It must have all. It must give all. Or else it is not true love. There are no limits to the service that love brings.* "Have salt in yourselves," said Jesus.

III

THE GOSPEL OF NEW OPPORTUNITY

"If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature."—

The gospel is a call to a *new opportunity*. It is an earnest exhortation to all men to "turn around and go back to the place where the trail divides, and next time keep to the right." It is the "Good News" that life can be redeemed.

III

THE GOSPEL OF NEW OPPORTUNITY

"If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature."—
2 Cor. 5. 17.

SOME twelve or fourteen years ago I was one of a party of high-school boys who climbed Long's Peak. We were confident that we were amply able to care for ourselves, so we did not take a guide. We had not been long upon the trail before we began to notice that we were going down grade almost all the time. Instead of getting nearer to the mountaintop we seemed to be going deeper into the valleys. After we had been following this trail for an hour or so we met a man and asked him the way to the top of Long's Peak. He stopped and laughed at us and made all manner of fun of us because we had fancied that we would ever reach the summit of the peak by following that trail. Finally he said to us, "Turn around and go back to the place where the trail divides, and next time keep to the right." It was good advice. We followed it. And finally we gained the summit.

Now, then, let me read you a few verses from

the prophecy of Ezekiel: "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Return ye, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live."

This is the very thing about which Paul is writing. This is the very thing for which Jesus lived and died. This is the whole meaning of the church and the Gospel. You and I have missed the trail. If we continue to live as we have been living we will never reach the summit. Our lives will only sink the deeper into the shadows of the valleys of regret. *The gospel is a call to a new opportunity. It is an earnest exhortation to all men to "turn around and go back to the place where the trail divides, and next time keep to the right."* It is the "Good News" that life can be redeemed. Lives that are blasted by evil can be transformed and made whole in purity and holiness. Our Gospel is *the Gospel of New Opportunity*. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature."

I

We live in a world that is grown bitter and cynical with pessimism. Just before the last election I was talking with a man downtown about one of the candidates. This candidate had taken a stand on one of the issues of the campaign with which my friend violently disagreed. He suggested that this particular candidate had taken this particular attitude because he thought it would win for him a particular block of votes. I ventured to ask if it might not be possible that the candidate we were discussing honestly believed that the course he was pursuing was right. My friend scoffed at the idea. He could not conceive of the possibility of a man who differed from him being sincere and honest in his convictions. That sort of an attitude is the very essence of bigotry and prejudice. *You and I have no right to expect anyone else to believe that we are honest and sincere in our beliefs unless we in turn are willing to grant the honesty and sincerity of those who differ with us.* That is a part of the "A B C's" of Christianity as well as of citizenship.

I have an uncle who has been in government service for quite a number of years. Recently in a letter my aunt referred to the petty per-

sonal feuds that are so common among men in political life. "Politics," she said, "is certainly rotten, and just how rotten one never knows until they get on the inside and see how things actually work. . . . The names 'Republican' and 'Democrat' are very good names to conjure the public with, but when they get to Washington there is no difference. They are all the same—just politicians trading with each other for the things they want most."

This statement is fairly representative of the pessimistic view that a large number of people are taking of the possibility of creating a truly wholesome political life.

This same spirit of pessimism obtains whenever men begin to discuss the problem of war and peace. Seven or eight years ago we were all thrilled with the challenge to win a war that was to end all war. And in the years that have succeeded we have been learning the bitter lesson that we were following a phantom "will-o-the-wisp." *The war to end war did not end war. And no war that we may ever fight will ever end war. War only breeds more war. Hate begets hate. Strife stirs up ever more strife. Preparations for war are just that and nothing else, preparations for war. They never make peace.* To-day there are many folks

who are saying, with a sense of futility and despair, that wars are inevitable. They will always come. There is no escape.

A similar atmosphere of pessimism sometimes surrounds a discussion of the possibility of a real Christianization of the business world. I was talking with a man, just the other day, about becoming a Christian. He asked me this question: "Do you think that a man can be a Christian and go into business as business is conducted to-day?" We survey the general spirit and the practices prevalent in business. We see selfishness exalted. We see greed and avarice deified. We see the system breeding relentless disregard for the rights of others. We see money rated above manhood and cash above character. Just the other week the Legislature of the State of Kansas passed a law to protect quails from the depredations of hunters and refused to ratify the Child Labor Amendment. In Kansas, apparently, quails are worth more than children. And many of us are inclined to despair of ever ameliorating the ruthless struggle of competition. We hear men saying that it is hopeless to expect the gospel to prevail in the business world.

We often find this same pessimism clouding our thinking about the problems of our indi-

vidual personal life. I went to see a man one evening this week in Denver, to talk to him about becoming a Christian. "I was converted once," he told me. "But I did not hold out. I gave it up. I don't want to do that again. How do I know that I won't go back on it even if I do try it again?" Did you ever hear anyone talk like that? Did you ever feel that way yourself? Did you ever hear anyone talking about the possibility of men overcoming their temptations and living honest, loyal, sincere, and holy lives, speak of "human nature" as an insuperable barrier? Did you ever hear anyone say, "You can't change human nature"?

Amidst all this fog and gloom of pessimism with which men regard the possibilities of spiritual attainment, I want to challenge you to think of the significance of this statement of Paul's: "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." I want you to raise in your minds the question whether or no there can be such a thing as a *Gospel of New Opportunity*.

II

I would like to invite you to come with me on a long journey into the past. We must wearily make our way up hill and down along a long, hot, dusty, stony path in early summer. Just ahead in a little valley nestles a white-

walled Syrian town. Outside the village gate and something like half a mile from the town a little clump of trees marks the site of an ancient well. There Jesus is seated resting in the welcome shade of the trees. A few steps from him stands a Samaritan woman. And this is what Jesus is saying: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life."

What shall we make of a statement like this? Is this man a visionary dreamer? What does he mean by this spring of living water? Can it be possible that he is blind to the realities of life? If we will be patient and draw near and listen to the rest of the conversation, we will have the answer to our question. Jesus is not blind to the sordid realities of life. His clear-seeing eyes immediately pierced through the petty defenses that this heart-hungry woman of the streets tried to erect. He saw her in all the sordidness of her sin. He helped her to see herself as she had never seen herself before. And he told her about the *Gospel of New Opportunity*. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature."

It was just because of the despair and the pessimism of men that Jesus came to speak the

good news to their hearts. When men were beginning to say that the political life of the world was hopelessly corrupt, Jesus came to talk about the kingdom of God. Did you ever think of the fact that "*kingdom*" is a *political term*? When Jesus spoke of the "kingdom of God" he took the current form of political organization and transformed it by the power of the presence of God. He came to tell the world that old political forms can be done away and new forms created wherein social justice and human sympathy can find expression. To-day *Christianity is a gospel of hope. It is the only promise of redemption for the sordidness of the world's political life that the world knows.* If you and I will take Jesus at his word, make him Lord and Master of our political relations as well as of our emotional life, then "the kingdom of the world" will "become the kingdom of our Lord." This is the *Gospel of New Opportunity.*

To a world that is weary of the waste and wanton destruction, the sheer brutality, the deliberately fostered hatred, the lying propaganda of war, the Christian gospel has new meaning to-day. At last we are beginning to see that *Jesus was not using fine flowers of poetic imagery when he talked about peace and good will. He was using the language of the*

sheerest literal fact. When we find the Protestant churches of America, practically without a single exception, placing themselves on record in their great national assemblies as unalterably opposed to the whole war system; when we find men like Sherwood Eddy saying with all the fervor and earnestness of a prophet of God: "I am done with war forever. I will never have anything to do with another war"; when we find statesmen like Senator Borah leading a movement for the outlawry of war by the civilized world; then we begin to dare to hope that the visions of the prophets are yet to be made real in the life of men. *There is one, and only one, philosophy of life that declares that good will can supplant force in human relationships; there is one, and only one, religion that believes in the possibility of bringing all races and peoples into one harmonious brotherhood: that is the gospel of Jesus. It is the Gospel of New Opportunity.*

In *Twelve Tests of Character*, Fosdick tells of how Mr. Pollock, the author of the drama "The Fool," became interested in the New Testament. For many years he had given little thought to religion. Then one day he began to read the New Testament. To use his own words, "The further I went in the New Testament the more I said to myself, 'That's the

best common sense I ever read!" " *The very fact that we are beginning to question the real Christianity of our present standards of business ethics is one of the most hopeful signs I know. Christians, in increasing numbers, are honestly facing the challenge to make their business life genuinely Christian. Into the business as well as the political world Jesus has come with the Gospel of New Opportunity. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." And when business becomes genuinely baptized with the spirit of Jesus it too will become a "new creation."*

Finally, we come to face the problem of personal salvation. This is the really crucial problem. Politics and business are only convenient fictions. Through it all we are dealing simply with men. All these other questions hinge upon this one: Is it possible to change the life of a man that he becomes a veritable "new creature"? That is the heart of the *Gospel of New Opportunity*. Are you weary and discouraged? Do you feel beaten and helpless? Has life, for you, settled into a rut from which you seem unable to lift yourself? Do you feel like one caught in the intricate machinery of an inexorable machine? Are you pessimistic about the possibility of living the life that is described in the Gospels?

Then, my brother, this gospel is meant directly for you. It is the *Gospel of New Opportunity*. It was for you that Jesus came and lived and died. For it is true. The gospel is "the power of God."

Let me illustrate this with one example. When I went away to college I was sent as the minister to a little country community in southeastern Nebraska. The first Sunday I was there I got acquainted with a young man whose life had run up a blind alley. His people were desperately poor. His father was an incurable drunkard. He had had to quit school and go to work to help support the family before he had finished the eighth grade. He was working on the section on the railroad along with a motley crew of Mexicans, Italians, and Turks. He was a common "section Jerry."

I will never forget one night in midwinter, the second year of my pastorate in that place. We were having a series of evangelistic services. The snow was between two and three feet deep and it was bitterly cold. I was staying with a farmer who lived about a mile from the church. That night the storm was so bad I debated whether it was worth while going to the church. It was so dark outside that even the horse that I rode could not keep in the

road. Just six people came that night. One of them was this young man, and his younger brother was another. At the close of the short meeting—after we had sung a few hymns, had read something from the Word, had had a word of prayer, and the preacher had talked for just a few minutes—these two young men stood up and gave their hearts to God.

I had a letter from that young man just a few weeks ago. When Christ came into his life there came a new vision, a new purpose and power to achieve that purpose. He quit his job on the section. He determined to finish his education. He finished his high-school work in three years. He completed four years' college work in three. Next spring he will receive his degree from a theological school in the East. He is going to India, a messenger of the glad tidings of the *Gospel of New Opportunity*. What this gospel did for my friend, it will do for you. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature."

IV

THE EXPANDING LIFE

"And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."

Life with Jesus becomes an ever *expanding life*, a life clarified by a vision of transformed values, vitalized by larger motives, broadened and deepened by wider horizons.

IV

THE EXPANDING LIFE

Mark 1. 16-20

"And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."—*Mark 1. 17.*

JESUS chose his first disciples from the fishermen of Galilee. There were no idlers among those whom he called to follow him: Matthew from his custom house, Simon and Andrew, James and John from their nets. They were all hard-working, busy men. In Jesus' invitation they recognized a higher call to wider fields of service. Jesus' coming to them marked an epoch in their lives. Their life with Jesus became an ever *Expanding Life*—a life clarified by a vision of transformed values, vitalized by larger motives, broadened and deepened by wider horizons.

(The words of our text are a symbol of the *expansion of life* wrought by their friendship with Jesus. Hitherto they had been fishermen. Had they never met Jesus, fishermen they would in all probability have remained all their days. Their lives had no larger purpose than to increase the harvest of their nets.

They sought no greater riches than they could bring to shore in their little fishing smacks. The horizon of their lives was bounded by the margin of Galilee, the occasional visit to Jerusalem, and the gossip in the market place of Greece and Rome and markets beyond the seas. They were contented that their life should be spent in catching fish.

And then one day came Jesus down the Capernaum beach. Can you not hear Simon speaking of that great experience:

“Fishers of men!” Did you see Him, John,
In the early glow of the morning sun,
And the glory that shone in His face, and his eyes?
He seemed like an angel from Paradise.
And yet like a brother, like one you had known
All of your life, like a friend who had gone
Through storm and sun with you hand in hand.

“Fishers of men!” I can see Him stand
Here in the boat yet. And, John, did you mind
His voice—like the breath of the western wind,
As He told of His Father. John, could it be
He was speaking of God, and of you, and of me?

“Fishers of men!” Is He fisherman too?
And could we be like Him, I and you?
John, I could follow a man such as He
Clear through the gates of eternity.

“Fishers of men!” If He meant me and you,
John, let us go and be fishermen too.

So Jesus came into the life of Simon and Andrew and James and John. And straightway

their lives began to grow. New purposes were awakened within them. Their eyes caught visions of riches that were greater than any offered in the markets of Capernaum. The old horizons of life were pushed further and further back. For the life with Christ is always an *Expanding Life*.

our text suggests I

(There are three ways in which the life with Christ becomes an *Expanding Life* that are suggested by the words of our text. In the first place, *when Simon became a disciple Jesus began to transform his sense of values*. Things which hitherto he had prized highly began to lose their worth in his esteem. And other things to which he had hitherto given but little thought became priceless. Hitherto he had been a fisherman. The chief values in his life had been the interests of his business.

You may judge a man somewhat by his conversation. What were the subjects most often discussed by these fishermen as they rested after their long night's labor, or exchanged greetings with friends in the market place? The size of the season's catch of fish; the market price at Taricheæ; the stirring scenes at their last visit to Jerusalem; the latest gossip concerning Herod, and Pilate, and Roman

~~Cæsar, the storm last night that wrought such havoc in the Galilean fishing fleet.~~

Then came Jesus. And a new standard of values was held before them. "I will make you to become fishers of men." Those hated publicans who collected Roman taxes; the sinner and the outcast whom the austere Pharisees avoided like the plague; the despised Samaritan whose very neighborhood brought defilement—these were the fish for which Jesus invited them to set their nets. The old topics of the market place were gradually forgotten. And in their place we hear Simon at Pentecost preaching repentance and faith and the kingdom of God, the joy and peace of forgiveness, and the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Old values were cast aside and new values became regnant in their lives since Jesus called them "to become fishers of men."

Jesus has wrought a similar transformation of the values of human society. The challenge of the Master to the fishermen of Galilee to turn their attention from catching fish to catching men is a symbol of the *expansion of life* that Jesus has wrought. In the world to which Jesus came human values were of little worth. The civilization of Rome was built on human slavery. Men were not citizens but subjects, the chattels of the emperor. The

story of the progress of Christianity is the story of the rising worth of human values and the progressive subordination of material wealth. Slavery has been banished. The position of womanhood and childhood has been lifted from degradation and misery to honor and boundless opportunity. Property interests are becoming more and more subordinated to personal and community welfare. The kingdom of heaven is coming. *Jesus and his teachings are transforming the ideals and the values of the world.*

Every individual who becomes a disciple of Jesus experiences the same transformation of values and ideals. The objects for which we were striving before we met Jesus lose all their glamour and become sordid and petty in the light of the new vision that he gives. "What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ." Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." No longer can we be satisfied merely to catch fish. How trivial seems to us now the old ambition for personal profit and selfish gratification! For we have heard the voice of the Master calling us "to become fishers of men." We have had a vision of the riches of heaven, the incalculable spiritual blessings "in the heav-

only places in Christ." As Jesus takes possession of your heart and mine, he transforms our values and ideals. Life with Christ is an *Expanding Life*.

II

In the second place, *Jesus brought to Simon and his fellow fishermen a larger and a nobler purpose*. Hitherto the chief business of their life had been fishing. From henceforth they were engaged in bigger business. This did not mean that they were to forego all gainful occupations. We cannot forget that for many years Paul supported himself and his missionary campaigns by the labor of his own hands. There were some in Thessalonica who were so carried away with the joy of their new-found faith that they ceased to work for a living and became a burden on their brethren. To these Paul wrote admonishing them to return to their tasks and forbidding the church to support any able-bodied men and women in idleness. The world still needed the labor of men's hands, after Jesus came as well as before. But *the task of making a livelihood was no longer the chief end and aim of their existence*. "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." *The big business of these men's lives became, not the ac-*

cumulation of wealth, but the building of the kingdom of God.

This is still the message of Jesus to the world. He came to a world that was all absorbed in the struggle for bare physical existence, and for the piling up of wealth that could, by its very nature, prove nothing more than a mere transient possession. And his ringing message to men of every generation has been: "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." *Jesus challenges you and me to turn* us *our attention from the problem of making a living to that of making a life.*

The life that is without Christ is still absorbed in the business of making a living. For how many of us has life little meaning other than a hard, ~~bare-fisted, bleeding-knuckled,~~ back-breaking struggle for possession of a little hoard of material things. How much time do we spend in developing our mind, in fostering our capacity to appreciate and enjoy art and music and the things that enrich the higher life? And how much still less time do we spend in the cultivation of the spiritual life within, in deepening our faith, and in enlarging our capacity for communion with God?

When Jesus comes into our life immediately

the interests of the kingdom of God become the major interests of life. The man who is in Christ ~~is no longer a banker, or a farmer, or a lawyer, or a carpenter.~~ He is not even a Christian banker or Christian farmer. He is a banker Christian, a farmer Christian. Do you see the difference? The business of banking or farming or carpentering is subordinated to the bigger business of serving Christ. *will* He may continue to farm, or to serve his community in the bank, or to build houses, just as he did before. And, if he is true to Jesus, he will be a better workman than he ever was before he heard the Master's call. But in his occupation he now sees not merely a means of making a living or accumulating wealth. He sees in it an avenue of service for his Lord. His life is infinitely larger and more worth while than it was before. There come to him satisfactions that were undreamed of in the past. For Jesus has brought to him a larger, nobler purpose. The life with Christ is an *Expanding Life*.

III

(In the third place, *the life with Christ is an Expanding Life because it is life with ever-widening horizons.* Think how amazingly Jesus pushed back the horizons of Simon's

life. When first they met ^{by} ~~there on~~ the Galilæan Sea, Simon's world was a very little world. We would call him provincial in the extreme. At the farthest none of these fishermen had probably ever been more than a hundred miles from the place of their birth. Perhaps once a year they made the journey to Jerusalem. And Jerusalem was no farther from Galilee than we are from Denver. There probably is not a twelve-year-old boy in Fort Collins but has a wider knowledge of the world to-day than did any of the men who became the disciples of Jesus. Their whole life was lived within the narrow limits of one of the smallest of Roman provinces. Their horizon was bounded by the margin of the lake on which they sailed their boats. They had little interest in anything outside of the concerns of their fishing business.

And then came Jesus with ^{the} ~~his~~ invitation: "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." And behold how he began to push back their horizons. He taught them to think in terms of the ever-growing kingdom of God. Beginning "in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." John became the beloved Bishop of Ephesus. Andrew traveled through all the countries surrounding

the Black Sea; Thomas and Bartholomew are said to have journeyed as far as India; and Simon Peter was martyred in Rome.

Jesus is still pushing back the horizons of men. The old narrow Jewish exclusivism is banished from human thought. ~~And the fol-~~lowers of Jesus are everywhere proclaiming, "Whosoever will, let him come." When first we become acquainted with Jesus he begins to push back our horizons. He turns our thoughts and purposes outward from our narrow, self-centered life and we become conscious of our neighbors. We begin to think in terms, not of our own rights and privileges, but of our responsibilities and opportunities of service. And the longer we walk with Jesus, the farther does he push back the boundaries of our neighborhood. The circle of our benevolence extends from those who are immediately related to us by ties of blood or friendship and includes our whole community. We become genuinely interested in seeing our community made truly Christian. He pushes back the boundaries still farther, and we are interested in other communities, in distant parts of our own land; He pushes back the boundaries yet again, and our neighborhood takes in China and India and Africa. World Service becomes a challenging opportunity.

Every revelation of human need to which we have the power of responding becomes for us an obligation of wider service. So Jesus is constantly pushing back the horizon. For the life with Christ is an *Expanding Life*.

It was sunrise over the blue waters of Galilee. The weary fishermen were cleaning and mending their nets. They were worn out by their long night's toil and discouraged because of its fruitlessness. Then Jesus came walking down the beach. And anon their hearts were thrilled by his invitation: "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." And then it was daybreak in the soul of Simon. And it was sunrise in the heart of Andrew. And a new day was dawning, not only over Galilee, but over all the world. And to you and to me has come this blessed invitation. It lifts our life to a higher plane by its vision of new ideals and loftier, purer purposes. It transforms our outlook by the widening horizon of our interest and the opportunity of ever-widening fields of service. The life with Jesus is an ever *Expanding Life*.

V

HEARTS THAT HUNGER

"Feed my sheep."

There is something in the insight of faith, there is something in the courageous confidence that that faith begets in human hearts, there is something in the kind of life that that faith produces, there is something in this gospel that will satisfy all these cravings of the human spirit.

V

HEARTS THAT HUNGER

John 6. 27-51

"Feed my sheep."—*John 21. 17.*

WERE you ever hungry? Did you ever have to go days on end without sufficient nourishment? Have you ever found yourselves in the position where food, simply a bare sustenance for existence, became the supreme motive, the one thought uppermost, the most compelling desire? Probably there is no one here who has ever had to endure such a terrible experience. I sincerely trust that none of us shall ever have to face it. But there are literally millions of people alive on this earth to-day who are facing just that very thing. Perhaps there are not quite so many people standing face to face with absolute starvation to-day as there were a few years back. Four years ago¹ there were more than eleven million children in Europe, orphaned and left destitute by the scourge of war. Only three years ago there were still nine million people in Russia alone who had no other food except

¹ Written in 1925.

that which the generosity of America could send to them. Conditions have improved a bit since then. But still this is a hungry world in which we live. Even here in our own opulent United States, at this very hour, there are more than two million men out of employment. That means that there are at least five million people here in America without a means of livelihood to-day. For one out of every twenty of all the people in the United States to-day the one question uppermost is the question of daily bread.

This is a hungry world. There are millions of folk who are suffering for want of bread to eat. But there are millions more who are hungering for other things than daily bread. Last year there were some fifteen hundred people who received some kind of help from the Red Cross and the Salvation Army here in Pueblo. There are men and women and boys and girls here in our own community who are hungry for bread. But there are many more who are suffering from a different kind of hunger, a *hunger of the heart*. It is of these that Jesus was thinking when he spoke to the Jews in the synagogue at Capernaum. It was of the task of ministering to these *Hearts That Hunger* that he was thinking when he gave his commission to Simon.

This is a very simple and vivid putting of the call to Christian service. Have you ever noticed how Jesus liked to compare the need of men for God with the most elemental needs of life? "The wind bloweth where it listeth. . . . So is everyone that is born of the Spirit"—*as necessary as the very air that we breathe is the gospel of God.* How long could you live if you ceased to breathe? No more can you hope to keep alive the spirit within apart from God. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." *Can you conceive of any suffering more intense than the agony of those who are perishing of thirst? Such is the spiritual destitution of those who live without God.* "I am the light of the world." We are told that men have gone mad in the long arctic night, when for days and weeks they do not see the light of sun. *And so men grow mad to-day in spirit, become morally unbalanced, lose their spiritual bearings, when they cut loose from God.* "I am the bread of life." Many an acute observer of history has remarked that "revolutions are born in empty stomachs." When men become desperately hungry all the bonds of society are cast loose. *And when men begin to leave God out, when men begin to starve their souls, then all human life, both in the*

individual relationships and in the wider circles of society, dissolves in moral anarchy.

This, says Jesus, is the task of the church: "Feed my sheep." He is thinking of the great undefined, inarticulate longings and desires of men. He is thinking of the unvoiced need, the wordless craving, the turbulent unrest deep in the heart of the race that can never be satisfied with anything short of God. He is thinking of that which Augustine had discovered when he wrote, "Thou hast made us for thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee." The great compassionate spirit of Jesus was sensing something of the agony of spiritual starvation that is at the root of all human misery and woe. He was thinking of all the *Hearts That Hunger* wherever the children of men are dwelling. And he was saying to Simon, and through him he is saying to you and me to-day, that in this gospel in which we put our trust, in this gospel that we are commissioned to preach, there is food for the hungry hearts of men. *There is something in the insight of faith, there is something in the courageous confidence that that faith begets in human hearts, there is something in the kind of life that that faith produces, there is something in this gospel that will satisfy all these cravings of the human*

spirit. If you should look up from your heavily laden dinner table this noon and see, peering at you through the window, a face that was pinched and shrunken with absolute starvation, would you turn your back upon that face and continue your comfortable repast with an untroubled conscience? Brethren, we are living in a community that is full of folk with *Hearts That Hunger*. And the Master is saying to us this morning: "I am the bread of life. Feed my sheep."

II

Did you ever see a flock of sheep just before feeding time? In the northern part of Colorado, where I have lived for a good many years, one of the principal industries is feeding sheep. Nearly every farmer has a feeding pen, and every winter he fills his pens with lambs to fatten for the market. When feeding time arrives how eagerly the sheep come pushing and crowding up to the troughs! Out in the quiet meadows all is peaceful and serene. But in the feeding pens all is a tumult of bedlam. There is a ceaseless pushing and crowding. One is forever forcing its way in front of the others, only to be pushed aside by another. They trample one upon the other. They crowd into the corners of the pen, almost

suffocating the sheep in the middle of the group. They climb up upon one another's backs. The whole flock is restless, uneasy, dissatisfied. Over all is an endless querulous bleating of discontent.

Did you ever watch a crowd of folk on a corner of a busy street? Did you ever attend an auction sale? Did you ever go to a big free barbecue? Did you ever find a quiet eddy in the surge of the throngs at the State fair in the autumn and, drawing a bit apart to catch your breath, study the faces and listen to the voices of the people that go thronging by? Did you ever stand in front of an audience, large or small, and try to read the faces that uplifted toward you? Did you ever take time to think over what the faces you have seen in the course of a day have been trying to say? Or did you try to recall the impression that the many voices that you hear as you go about any day's ordinary tasks have made upon you? It is a fascinating study this, the study of folks. It is something that gets hold of your heart-strings, that grips your conscience, that stirs your emotions. It is something that brings to you an increasing appreciation of all that the gospel of Jesus means, and of all that it might mean to the world, and of all that it may come to mean if you and I are only faithful to

our high commission. There is something about this study of the faces and this listening to the voices of people that reminds us of the figure of Jesus. He is standing on a hilltop overlooking the blue waters of Galilee. The glory light of the morning sun is flooding all the hills and valleys with iridescent light. Out from the near-by villages the crowds of people come streaming, some hastening down the narrow, crooked paths, some leaping over fences and hedges and running across the fields. Tears fill the eyes of the Master, and for many moments his heart is too full for speech. "When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd."

Have you ever thought of that picture of Jesus when you have watched the crowds milling about in the parks on a Sunday afternoon? Have you ever thought of it when you have seen the throngs pouring into and out of the motion picture theaters? Have you ever thought of it as you have seen the streets lined with an eager, restless, pushing, crowding multitude, waiting to see a holiday parade? Have you ever thought of it as you have seen the loiterers around the pool rooms and soft-drink parlors, or when you have listened to the

ribald jesting of painted faces? Have you ever thought about it when you have seen great crowds eagerly pressing in to listen to some self-appointed lecturer on the latest religious fad, or the most modern political nostrum? Have you ever thought of that picture of Jesus as you have listened to the conversation as it is tossed back and forth in some group of congenial friends, or in a chance knot of folk gathered for a moment on a street corner? One preacher has recently remarked that the thing that has impressed him most about a crowd is its wistfulness. The most universal characteristic of folks in the mass is the fact of their wants, the something, often undefined, never clearly realized, something that they desire, that they do not have. There is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction, of petulance, of querulousness, of half-stifled, angry protest in the heart of all the race. It is the cry of *Hearts That Hunger*. And do you not hear the Master's summons, "Feed my sheep"?

In every crowd and in every community there are the weary, harassed, worried, and anxious folk; the folk who are afraid of poverty. They are caught in the toils of economic insufficiency. The monthly bills are each month too dangerously near the monthly pay check. Income and outgo never balance with

a satisfactory surplus. Life is haunted with the specter of pursuing want. There are the hard, embittered, cynical folk; folk who are nursing in their hearts grievances that long ago should have been buried. I cannot tell you how many people with whom I have talked since I came to Bethel have told me of something that happened here in the church five, ten, fifteen years ago. And they are letting the memory of that old grievance stand as a barrier between them and God to-day. There are the discouraged, beaten, futile folk; the folk whose lives are personal failures. They have dreamed brave dreams when they were young. Then came the disillusioning years. Their dreams have faded and left them only the crumbling leaves of old regrets. There are the puzzled, baffled, heartbroken, grief-stricken folk; folk who have met with strange misfortune. The world to them has been a hard, unlovely world. Life has been unkind, and memory is a scourge with bits of steel plaited in every strand of recollection. There are the eager, restless, dissatisfied folk; folk who are living for the satiety of sensation; folk who must ever drive themselves on to seek some new form of excitement. There are the folk who are hard pressed in a losing fight for their ideals. They are standing with

their backs against the wall. The enemy is closing in around them. Business competition presses close. They see a competitor throwing scruple to the winds and striking close. Social competition sears their souls. They see another, through compromise with moral purity, seizing the prize they fain would grasp. Temptations thicken round them. Their souls are cowering before the coming onslaught when they feel that they must surrender. There are the folk who are genuinely hungry and thirsting after God. Can you not see them—these sheep without a shepherd? Perhaps—nay, certainly—I know that I have been describing some of you who are here this morning. And *Jesus is speaking to you and to me: "O Hearts That Hunger, here is food that will satisfy every demand of your driven spirits. I am the bread of life. Feed my sheep."*

He is saying to the weary, harassed, worried, and anxious folk: "Trust in God. Learn of me the futility of wearing out your life in needless worry and anxiety. Is not the life more than food and the body more than raiment? Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these other things will come in their place." He is saying to the hard, embittered, cynical folk: "Cast

out the hate and the treasured grievances that you have been hugging so tightly to your hearts. Do you not see how the gangrene of dead memories is eating into your very souls? Why should you rob all of the to-morrows to feed such yesterdays? See how the heavenly Father deals with those who despise his name and scorn to obey him. He sendeth the rain upon the just and on the unjust. Come, learn of me, the joy of forgiving and forgetting." He is saying to the discouraged, beaten, futile folk: "Courage, take heart. The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. If any man is in Christ Jesus he is a new creature. Old things are passed away. Behold they are become new. The Word of the Cross is the power of God. Turn your back upon the old life. Rise to new things. Lo, I am with you always." He is saying to the puzzled, baffled, grief-stricken, heavy-hearted: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people. Not one sparrow falleth but the heavenly Father knows. And ye are of more value than many sparrows. Of those whom the Father hath given me, not one of them shall be ever lost. Behold the vision of the eternities that are yours. All things are yours and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." He is saying to the eager, restless, dissatisfied throngs that

are groping so blindly for what they do not know: "Come unto me and learn of me. Here is a challenge to thrill your soul. Go ye and capture the citadels of sin and selfishness. Build with me a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." He is saying to the folk hard-pressed and ready to surrender: "Stand fast in the faith. Quit ye like men. Be strong. It is no lone fight, nor is it a losing fight in which you are engaged. They that be with you are more than they that be against you. God always fights for every man who fights for right. And if God be for us, what matters who may be against us? The gospel is a trumpet of victory." He is saying to the *Hearts That Hunger* after God, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

This is the gospel that we preach, the gospel of a Christ who satisfies. O Hearts That Hunger, here is food to satisfy your souls. I have read of men who, in the desperation of starvation, have gnawed the leather in their shoes and chewed dry twigs and withered leaves. By such expedients as these all too many of us are trying, to-day, to still the *hunger of our hearts* that only God can satisfy. "I am the bread of life," says Jesus. "Feed my sheep."

VI

THE LAW OF SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT

"According to your faith be it done unto you."

We must distinguish between a wish that may be little more than a mere beautiful sentiment or a gush of emotion and a desire that so sums up all of our human craving that it becomes the concentrated expression of our total personality. The only limit to the power of God to give is the willingness of men to receive. The meagerness of our expectation is the barrier that bars the way to the coming kingdom of God.

VI

THE LAW OF SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT

Matt. 9. 27-33

"According to your faith be it done unto you."—
Matt. 9. 29.

DURING the Indian wars, in the colonial period of American history, a young captain, serving in the colonial army, was commissioned to capture a notorious Indian Chief. His first attempt ended in failure. He returned to headquarters and began to make his report. The commanding officer interrupted him with the curt dismissal: "I do not care to hear why you failed to capture your man. You may go and you need not return until you have succeeded. When you have succeeded I will be glad to hear how it was done." That was a characteristically American remark. We Americans are wont to worship success. We are ready to forgive a man almost anything else if he has made a success of some undertaking. Sometimes we overlook some of the finest traits of genuine manhood and personal worth in our idealization of success.

The criticism most often passed upon the

Christian Church is quite in keeping with this tendency to idolize success. The man in the street dismisses with a show of contempt your average church member. He is a hypocrite, he says, who does not live up to his profession. He is a failure in the enterprise of moral and spiritual attainment. In religion, as well as in business or industry, we insist that a man must succeed if he is to merit and win our approval.

This criticism is no more fair than the criticism that we pass somewhat summarily upon apparent failures in any undertaking. Such superficial judgment is always blind to some of the most significant values of life. *You can never completely sum up a life by striking a "trial balance" of apparent available assets, either moral or material.*

At the same time we are all of us interested in discovering the secret of success. There is an inner urge in our human personality that cannot be satisfied without some real creative achievement. Every magazine that you pick up on the news stands is filled with advertisements of correspondence courses, or memory courses, or patented schemes for self-culture. All of these promise to enable anyone who will follow their directions to become more successful in business or in society. I must con-

fess that it is always hard for me to turn over the page from such an advertisement without signing on the dotted line. Certainly, we who are the followers of Jesus ought to be interested in discovering the secret of success in spiritual attainment. How many an hour of pain and travail of soul we have known as we have wrestled with the thought, "If I could only be the man or the woman that I know I ought to be!"

That is just what Jesus was talking about that sunlit day in Galilee. He was dealing with the immediate problem of helping two blind men to regain their sight. But he put into words one of the great fundamental laws of all human living, the *Law of Spiritual Attainment*: "According to your faith be it done unto you."

Sometimes we are inclined to think that some of the conditions laid down in the Bible are arbitrary and unreasonable. Take this demand for "faith" for instance. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," said Paul to the Philippian jailer. And some have found a difficulty here. Why is it that a man should be required to have faith before God will confer upon him salvation? At first thought such a condition may appear to us a bit arbitrary. But, after we come to think it

through, we will begin to understand the marvelous insight and wisdom of Jesus. This is no more an arbitrary demand than any other of the conditions that determine our life in this world. *The Law of Spiritual Attainment is no more an arbitrary principle than is the law of gravitation or the law of cause and effect.* It is simply a statement of the way in which the whole universe is constructed. Jesus laid such emphasis upon faith because, in the very nature of things, that is the only way in which salvation can ever come to anyone. Let us study together this statement of Jesus of the divine *Law of Spiritual Attainment*. "According to your faith be it done unto you."

I

It will help to clarify our thinking if we can define what we mean by "faith." *The Bible is not primarily a book of definitions. It is a book of thrilling, dynamic, vital experience. It is a transcript from human life.* But there is in the opening verse of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews a statement that we might take as a kind of a definition of faith. It will afford us a clue by which we may clarify our thinking about it. "Faith is assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things¹ not seen."

¹ The American Standard Version renders this "a conviction of things not seen."

Suppose we take this statement as something of a definition of faith. It at once becomes clear that when we speak of "faith" we speak of something that contains an element of "desire." We refer to something that we very much want. Suppose, then, that we apply this to the statement of Jesus of the *Law of Spiritual Attainment*.

"According to your faith be it done unto you," said Jesus. Translate this into the language of our definition of faith: "According to your desire be it done unto you." Let us be careful that we do not press this too far. There are limits within which this form of statement will be true. There are a good many things which we very ardently desire in this world which we never get. No one has ever understood this any better than did the writer of this same Epistle to the Hebrews. In the same chapter from which we have drawn our definition of faith he observes that the great heroes of the Old Testament "All died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them and greeted them from afar." A part of the tragedy of life is the tragedy of unfulfilled desire. And *a part of the glory of life is the glory of trusting souls whose splendid and daring desire no apparent failure can ever destroy.*

We must not be blind to the limitations life puts upon the possibility of satisfying all our desires. And yet this remains eternally true. *The measure of your success and mine in spiritual attainment will be directly in proportion to our desires.* You can have just what you want in the way of victory over sin, of moral worth, and personal power for righteousness, of satisfying fellowship with God. Jesus promised: "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." That promise is not a mere rhetorical hyperbole. It is no mere figure of speech. Jesus was speaking simple and literal truth. *The only limit to the power of God to give is the willingness of men to receive.* The greatest single handicap to the growth of the kingdom of God in this community is the simple fact that all too many of us who are here in this house of worship this morning do not really want to see it grow.

We must beware that we do not become confused in our thinking. *We must distinguish between a wish that may be little more than a mere beautiful sentiment or a gush of emotion and a desire that so sums up all of our human craving that it becomes the concentrated expression of our total personality.* We want many things. But there are some things that we desire more than anything else in the world.

This is the way that the prophet Jeremiah has put it: "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." That is the *Law of Spiritual Attainment*. "According to your faith be it done unto you."

Some years ago I was pastor of a church in a little town in western Nebraska. The school-house in that town was a disgrace to any civilized community. The roof leaked. There were holes in the walls. The plaster was discolored by dirt and had fallen off in great patches. Some of the windows were broken and the holes stuffed full of rags. The winter winds blew snow through the holes in the walls and the cracks around the windows and doors. The furnace sent up smoke instead of heat. There were days every winter when it was impossible to hold school because the building was so cold the scholars could not stay in it.

That building had been in that condition for years. A whole generation of boys and girls had grown to manhood and womanhood with no better place to go to school in than that. There was scarcely a farmer in the district but had a better place in which to keep his pigs and chickens than he had to which to send his children to school. It wasn't because of their poverty. It was simply because they were satisfied with the kind of

school building they had. They didn't want anything better. Then there came a change in the mind and heart of the people. They began to be ashamed of the kind of school-house that they had. They began to desire a better place to which to send their boys and girls. This desire began to grow in power until it drove some of the citizens into action. For one whole year and nearly all of another they fought in one school meeting after another until finally they got a fine new school building and a better school than they had ever known before. As long as they were satisfied with the old conditions they made no progress. As soon as the desire for something better became the dominant motive of their lives they got what they wanted. That is the *Law of Spiritual Attainment*. "According to your faith be it done unto you."

I lived in a community in Colorado for a while where the public officials were notoriously corrupt. The attorney-general of the State declared that the county officers of that county were parties to the worst bootlegging ring that he knew anything about anywhere in the State. While I was living there two or three attempts were made to bring about a reform. They all abjectly failed. I saw the Ministerial Alliance of the city refuse to take

any part in trying to clean things up. The day they did that I resigned from the Alliance and never attended another meeting while I lived in that city. People used to talk about how terrible the situation was. Repeatedly I heard men question why it was that such crooked officials could stay in office; why it was that it seemed to be impossible to convict men of the crimes that everyone knew they were committing. The answer to those questions was easy to find. Those corrupt officials remained in office because the people of the county and city were satisfied to let them stay. They had the kind of government that they had because that was the kind of government that they really desired.

About the time that I left that community there came a change in the situation. The public conscience was aroused. A desire for cleaner government became the dominant motive in the life of the community. The next election the voters of that county cleaned house all down the line. They cleaned things up just as soon as they really wanted to.

I am a new comer in this city. I do not know very much about what kind of a city this is. But I do know this. If there are moral and political conditions here that are not what they ought to be, they are what they

are because the citizens of this city are satisfied to let them remain as they are. You can have clean government, you can have effective law enforcement, you can have a city that is known through the State for the high ideals of its citizens, for the strength of its churches, and for the righteousness of its community life, just as soon as you really desire that kind of a city. That is the *Law of Spiritual Attainment*. "According to your faith be it done unto you."

The first charge that I served as pastor was out in the dry-farming country in northeastern Colorado. Almost the first man that I met was the village postmaster. He was a member of the Board of Stewards and chairman of the Board of Trustees of the church. Just about the first thing that he said to me was that he thought that the church needed a revival. I was glad to hear him say that. But later on, as I got to know him better, I began to have my doubts about how much he really wanted that revival to come. I discovered that he kept his store open every Sunday, just as he did all through the week. I discovered that he liked to interlard his conversation with expletives such as are scarcely fitting for a leader in the church. And then I began to understand why the church did not have a revival.

He talked a lot about it. But down in his heart he didn't want any revival. I began to understand why it was that his spiritual life and the spiritual life of the whole community was feeble and ineffective.

My friends, this *Law of Spiritual Attainment* applies here in Casper just as it does everywhere else. I am told that the churches of this city are to unite in a great evangelistic campaign in November. I know that many people of this church, as in the other churches that are cooperating, are hoping for great things as the result of that campaign. I want to say to you with all of the earnestness that I can, that that campaign will mean for our church and for this community just what you and I really want it to mean. We are facing a tremendous spiritual opportunity. We can fling open the doors to the life of this community to the Spirit of God. We can shake it to the foundations. We can see it reborn with the new life of Christ. We can see literally thousands brought into the kingdom of God, their lives transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ, if we will let that become the great passionate desire of all our life during the next two months. *This is the Law of Spiritual Attainment.* "According to your faith be it done unto you."

II

There is another element in faith that is suggested by the definition we have quoted from the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. *Faith is more than an expression of a "desire." It is also a confident expectation that that desire will be realized.* We must not overlook this factor in our study of this divine *Law of Spiritual Attainment*. Let us again translate the words of our text into the language of this definition of faith: "According to your expectation be it done unto you."

When I was a boy I used to spend a good deal of time daydreaming. I had a vivid imagination and used to picture all kinds of things that I would like to do. I would like to be a great general and command armies and win battles. I would like to be a great lawyer and go to Congress and make wonderful orations. I would like to be a great explorer and penetrate the hidden mysteries of dark continents, and sail the uncharted waters of unexplored oceans. I spent hours and hours painting these pictures of future exploits in my imagination. But all of them have come to naught. I shall never do any of those things which I fancied I should like to do.

There was one boyhood dream of mine, how-

ever, that did not come to naught. When I was just a little bit of a boy I began to dream of going to college. It became one of the great desires of my life. I thought about it and wanted it so much that it became a settled thing in my mind, long before I even entered high school, that that was what I was going to do. I had definitely settled it in my own thinking that I expected it would come to pass. I did not know just how it would be. I could expect very little money from home. My father sent me fifty dollars once, and that was every penny of help that I ever got from anyone, with the exception of a couple of small loans. I wonder now, when I look back and think of how little I had. I don't know just how I ever managed to get through. But I did. I began with a great desire. And I went on to a settled expectation that that desire would be realized. So finally my faith became fact. That is the *Law of Spiritual Attainment*. "According to your faith be it done unto you."

We are talking these days a good deal about the practical application of Christianity to everyday life. We are saying that the Golden Rule must be applied to business and industry. We are saying that a Christian world will be a world where war is an outlaw and nations and races will live together in peace. We are

saying that all of life must be governed by the Sermon on the Mount and by the teaching of Jesus. Then we look around us and we grow pessimistic. We begin to ask ourselves the question if, after all, selfishness and lust and greed and hate are too powerful to be overthrown. We ask ourselves why it is that, after so many centuries, the gospel of Jesus seems still to be so futile as an agency for the complete transformation of the life of the world. I wonder if we will not find the answer to such puzzling questions in this *Law of Spiritual Attainment*. *Is it not true that, in our thinking about the Christianization of human life, we have really not been expecting Christ to conquer? Is it not true that when we talk about a warless world we do not really expect to see it realized? Is it not true that when we talk about putting the Golden Rule or the Sermon on the Mount into business relations we do so with mental reservations? We do not really expect that it is possible to do it? Right there we face the answer to our questions. One of the biggest reasons that the gospel of Jesus has not exerted a wider influence in the life of this world is that you and I have not honestly expected it to. The meagerness of our expectation is the barrier that bars the way to the coming kingdom of God. That is the Law of*

Spiritual Attainment. "According to your faith be it done unto you."

I am sure that I can leave it to you to make the application of this principle to the problems which we face as a church and as individuals. Whether it be the evangelistic campaign to which we are looking forward, or whether it be the problem of our own individual, personal spiritual ventures, our actual achievement will be measured by the degree of our expectations. Just how much are you honestly expecting that God will do for Casper during these next two months? Just how much real spiritual growth are you expecting in your own life this year? This is the *Law of Spiritual Attainment*. "According to your faith be it done unto you."

III

There is just one other thing about faith that I want to suggest to you briefly. That is this: *Faith is our human personal appropriation of the limitless power of God that is always at our disposal*, even when we do not realize it. If you had told my grandfather, fifty years ago, that it would be possible for him to whisper and, without any wires, or any visible means of communication, that whisper would be heard for a thousand miles, he would have

laughed at you and called you a witless fool. And yet my grandfather lived to see the day when that had literally come to pass. The radio is one of the newest discoveries of men. And yet there is nothing about the radio that is not as old as the universe itself. The air that Abraham breathed, when he played as a boy in far off Ur of the Chaldees, was just as fully charged with the power of wireless communication as is the air that is to-day ringing with the messages from a thousand broadcasting stations. The power has been there all the time. It has been waiting all these centuries for men to learn how to possess and use it.

It is just the same with the power of God. This power in inexhaustible supply is always everywhere available to those who will open the channels for its expression. Faith is simply the way by which the power of God is made available for human living. "All things are yours," said Paul. "The works that I do shall ye do also, and greater works than these shall ye do," said Jesus. The power is waiting to serve our needs. God is waiting for you and me to link hands with him and give him the opportunity to do the things that he desires to do. "According to your faith be it done unto you."

VII

WHEN JESUS QUESTIONED SIMON

"Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?"

If there had been any other way possible by which he could have helped this man to find himself and build anew his life on sure foundations, the Master would never have thus driven the probe deep into the festering wound in Simon's soul. But there was no other way.



VII

WHEN JESUS QUESTIONED SIMON

John 21. 15-19

"Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?"—*John 21. 16.*

It was in the gray half-light of early dawn. Seven fishermen were wearily pulling in their nets. Their little fishing smack lay perhaps a hundred yards from shore. As they were tugging away at the cold, wet ropes, one of their number remarked that Someone seemed to be trying to attract their attention on the shore. For a moment all eyes were turned toward the point, where, in the dim twilight, the uncertain outlines of a man's form could be just descried through the morning mists. Was Simon somewhat nearsighted? Or was it that the bitterness and shame of the dull, hopeless ache in his heart blinded his vision and he did not recognize the features or the voice of the Man who had hailed them from the shore? Then, suddenly, John clutched Peter by the shoulder, in a grasp that hurt in its intensity. In a voice half smothered with incredulous emotion he whispered, huskily, "It is the Lord." That was enough for Simon.

He could not wait for the slow progress of the boat laden with fish. In an instant he is over the side and swimming lustily for the shore.

I

To-night we are interested in a fragment of conversation between Jesus and Simon that followed that strange breakfast by the lake. It had been a strange meal indeed, unlike those former times together when the shuttle of conversation had been tossed back and forth from one to another of the group, with ever and anon a lull of quiet while all ears were listening to the earnest words of their well-loved Master. This morning all had been strangely silent. Perhaps they had not yet recovered from the awe and wonder of the apparition of One whom they had mourned as dead. Perhaps their hearts were all too full for speech. The Master, too, had had little to say. So they sat in silence round the fire, hardly venturing to look at him, yet never able to look very far away. And Jesus sat wrapped in thought, his gaze, for the most part, on the far Galilæan hill-tops, gilded and crimsoned with the rising sun.

Then, when they had finished eating, with a significant glance at Simon, he rose and drew somewhat apart from the others of the group. Who can imagine with what a tumult of emo-

tion Simon rose to follow him! What wild thoughts must have gone racing through his mind! The shame and misery in his heart became a veritable agony of sorrow and regret. The last time Jesus had looked at Simon he was in the house of Annas, the high priest. Simon's lips had hardly closed upon his profane denial that he had ever heard of such a man as Jesus. And then he had looked up, and Jesus, passing along the courtyard between the Roman soldiers who were his guards, had looked deep into Simon's soul. That look had broken Simon Peter's heart. What would the Master say to him now?

"Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?" And again Jesus was looking straight into the heart of Simon. If only the Master had been stern and hard. If only he had let loose his anger a bit. If only he had said to Simon some of those terrible things that Simon had been saying to himself every hour since that wretched moment in the house of Annas. It would have been easier then. "Traitor," "coward," "renegade," "betrayer of friend"—all these Peter was ready for. But that voice so resonant with yearning, so burdened with love held in restraint, so searching in the simplicity and directness of its questioning: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?"

And, as if that were not enough to break any strong man's heart—to find that the friend, whom you have most grievously and unpardonably wronged, is only eager that he may not have lost your love—as if that were not enough, those other words, “more than these.” Again Simon is remembering one of those hot, impetuous exclamations that had rushed headlong from his lips only a week before. It was that last night together. And Simon's incredulous ears had just caught the terrible significance of something that Jesus was saying. “I very well know,” he was saying, “that before daybreak this night you will all of you have forsaken me.” Before he had had time to think, Simon was half on his feet and, with a glance of scorn around at the other bewildered disciples, his brawny fisherman's fist had pounded on the table to emphasize his indignant reply: “Master, I want you to know that even if all of the rest of your friends desert you, here is one man at least who will never leave you.” And Jesus had replied, with words that were as dagger thrusts in Simon's very soul: “Simon, before daybreak you will be ready to swear that you never even knew me.”

And now Jesus again is speaking: “Simon, son of John, do you think that you love me

more than the rest of the disciples, now?" Let us not imagine that Jesus was standing on his dignity in thus questioning this disciple. *If there had been any other way possible by which he could have helped this man to find himself and build anew his life on sure foundations, the Master would never have thus driven the probe deep into the festering wound in Simon's soul. But there was no other way.* It was no mere repetition of those rash vows of loyalty with which he had become all too painfully familiar that he was seeking. Jesus always insists upon the most transparent honesty. There is nothing that he honors more in a man than absolute sincerity, even though it be a sincerity of doubt. *No man need fear to approach the Christ nor seek to join his company who will be utterly frank with him. Jesus wants your faith and mine to be genuine. That is all.*

II

We are likely to lose the real significance of this conversation because we must read the report of it in a translation. One of the perennial puzzles about this incident is the question of why Jesus repeated the same question three times over. And usually we have recourse to a comparison with the threefold

denial of Simon. I am sure that this is not the true interpretation. *Jesus never haggles over phrases with any man.* Jesus did ask Peter that heart-searching question three times, but he would have asked him thirty times if that had been necessary. We mistake the meaning when we do not recognize that *Jesus did not repeat the question at all. Each time he asked a different question.*

There is a play on words in the original that is lost in the translation. When Simon answered Jesus' question, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?" he said, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." But the word that he used, which is translated "love," is not the same as the word that Jesus used. They are two different words. The word that Jesus used is the stronger of the two. It is the word that he used when he said that "God so loved the world." And the word that Simon used is the same word from which the word for friend is derived. It is difficult to translate exactly into English these two words so as to bring out the real difference in their meanings. Perhaps we can best get at it to put it in this way:

Jesus said to Simon, "Simon, son of John, Do you think that you love me more than the other disciples, now?"

But Simon dared not answer with the same word Jesus used. *Time was when he could not have found a word for love that was strong enough to express his hot, impetuous emotion. But after that dark night of the betrayal, he could never be so completely cocksure of himself again.* So Simon answered: "Master, you know how much I care for you."

Then Jesus said: "We will forget about any matter of comparisons. Tell me, Simon, do you really love me?"

And Simon looked up into the Master's eager, searching eyes and said again, "Master, you know how much I care for you."

Then Jesus asked him a question that completely broke his heart. Have you ever puzzled over the question as to why it was that, as we read, "Peter was grieved because Jesus said unto him the third time, 'Lovest thou me' "? It was not because of the mere repetition of the question. That was not it. It was because of what Jesus really asked. This time Jesus no longer used the great strong word for "love." What he said was this: "Simon, son of John, Do you really care anything for me at all?" Do you not see now why Simon's voice was choked with sobs as he replied, "O Master, you know me better than I know myself. You know how much I care for you."

III

There is just one thing more about this incident that I want to call to your attention. *Each time that Simon confessed anew his love for Jesus, the Master suggested a way in which that love might find expression.* "Master, you know how much I care for you." "Then, Simon, be a shepherd of my sheep."

Isn't that the way love always works? When a young man falls in love with a dear, sweet girl is he content just to sit still and think about it? Ah! no. The florist and confectioner discover that they have a new customer. The real-estate agent begins to be interested. The architect gets out his pencil and blue prints. The carpenters and masons are busy anon at the building of a home. When love comes into a man's life immediately comes the query, "What can I do to give expression to my love?"

And so it is with Christ. Hitherto Simon had been content to be a listener, a disciple. Henceforth he is an apostle, "one sent" upon a mission for the one he loves. *As soon as love becomes conscious of its existence it must begin to find a task.* And you and I, if we have looked up into our Master's eyes and answered his heart-searching question as did Simon,

“Master, you know me better than I know myself, you know how much I care for you,” we too will find a task awaiting through which we can give that love expression. As surely as we begin to love the Christ, so surely will we begin to live and work for him.

VIII

SECOND-HAND FAITH

"Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me?"

You can make this faith your own. God can become a vital, personal experience in your daily life. The Bible can become for you a living book, feeding the springs of life with inexhaustible supplies. The church can become a glorious challenge commanding your utmost contribution of service. Jesus can become the One altogether lovely, the fairest among ten thousand. This faith which to-day is a second-hand experience can become verily your own, part of your very life.

VIII

SECOND-HAND FAITH

John 18. 28-38

"Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me?"—*John 18. 34.*

ONE Christmas day I was calling on a family the youngest member of which was a girl of five. She showed me all of her Christmas gifts. Among them were a new hat, new shoes, new gloves, and a new muff. "But my dress isn't really new," she said. "It's just one of sister's that mamma made over for me." Did any of you have to wear "hand-me-downs" that older brothers or sisters had outgrown? One day, on the street in Boston, I was accosted by a newsboy who wore a very singular garb. Upon closer examination I discovered that he had on a coat that was originally made for a large man. His poor, thin body and limbs were almost smothered in its ample folds. It was clearly to be seen that the coat was never made for him. It was a "second-hand" garment.

Now, there is really no disgrace in wearing "hand-me-downs" or second-hand clothing, if

that is the best that you can afford. I have seen some second-hand clothing that looked very well after it had been made over to fit its new wearer. There are other second-hand articles which it is not so respectable to wear. There are a good many folk whose mind is stocked with nothing better than a second-rate lot of rather badly shop-worn second-hand ideas. A few years ago I used one of Harry Emerson Fosdick's books in a Sunday-school class. One day I was very severely taken to task by two men because I was using a book written by such a terrible heretic. I asked both of these men if they had read the book that I was using. They told me that they not only had not read that book, but that they had not read anything that Mr. Fosdick had written. All they knew about him was what they had heard other people say. They were forming judgment upon and condemning him unheard, purely on the basis of second-hand ideas.

This was the trouble with Pontius Pilate. He had formed a hasty opinion of Jesus, based not upon his own experience, but upon the reports that the priests had taken to him. He assumed that Jesus must be a revolutionary agitator. Therefore his first question, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" *Jesus was not*

particularly concerned about the outcome of the trial. He was concerned now, as always, with the man to whom he was speaking. He was anxious to give to Pilate, just as he had been anxious to give to every man he met, a clearer understanding of the truth of God. He therefore tore open the shreds and tatters of the garment of second-hand ideas with which Pilate was clothing his thinking about Jesus, and drove home the searching question, "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me?"

This is a question that I would like to impress upon your thinking this morning. All of you who are here to-day have some kind of faith, some kind of an idea about God and some kind of an attitude toward him. You have some kind of belief about and attitude toward the Bible, and toward the church, and toward Jesus. I want to drive this question deep into the very soul of your thinking, until it shall never let you sleep till you have answered it. "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me?" Is your faith only a second-hand faith or is it genuinely your own?

I spent an hour or more one day, shortly after coming to Pueblo, talking with an old gentleman upon whom I went to call. He had

a grandson who was a member of the church. As for himself he said that he knew too much about the church to be a member of it. And then he went ahead to tell me all about the terrible things the church did and church members did. He told me how the preachers were dry and tedious and not up to date. Altogether he gave me quite a doleful obituary of the church. And, incidentally, it came out in the course of our conversation that he himself had not been to church in years. To my own knowledge he has never darkened the door of this building in the year and a month that I have been here. What business has a man like that to criticize or to hold any kind of an opinion of the church? His ideas were all second-hand. They were hand-me-downs. They were not his own.

A large part of the denials of faith that we meet with among men are of this variety. There are hundreds of people to-day who assume that science has very largely supplanted religion. It has proved that faith is a relic of ignorance and superstition. In these days of our modern enlightenment the church is an outgrown institution. So men say. *And there is not one man in a thousand who holds that kind of attitude who has ever made an investigation himself to find out just what*

science actually has discovered, and just what leading scientists actually believe.

Sometimes we hear a man say that Jesus is a man who lived long ago. He knew nothing of the discoveries of modern science. As we have left behind the antiquated science of the world in which Jesus lived, so we must expect to leave Jesus behind and look elsewhere for moral and spiritual guidance. If you are ever tempted to think that way about Jesus, I want to stab you wide awake with this query: "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me?" Have you studied the life of Jesus? Do you know what he actually taught and was? *Do not be misled into any cheap second-hand denials. Whatever you believe about Jesus, believe it for yourself and not because you have heard someone else repeat it.*

There are many people to-day who are thinking and saying that the Bible is an outgrown book. It is a book of the long ago. Its scientific views have been discredited. Its history must be revised by the results of archæological discovery. Its philosophy must be made over to bring it into harmony with our thought to-day. It remains as a great literature of the past, containing many passages of surpassing beauty and power. But it is essentially a

book of the past. Are there any of you who have been thinking that way about the Bible? Are there any of you who have been acting toward the Bible, by your indifference to its demands upon your conscience, as though that was what you think about it, even if you have not put it into so many words? Then I want you to face this penetrating question, "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me?" Have you studied the Bible for yourself? Do you know what it actually contains? Do you know it so well that you are able to pass judgment upon it intelligibly? Is this only a *Second-Hand Faith* about the Bible, or is it really your own?

I have every respect for any man who sincerely seeks the truth and honestly doubts some things in which I believe. I know that to the measure of his honesty and sincerity and to the measure in which he keeps his mind and heart open to the discovery of truth he will find that truth. If you have really thought these questions through for yourself or if you are thinking them through, if you are studying these problems with all of the best help that you can get, if you are honestly seeking to know, then I will honor you for your very questioning. But, as G. Campbell Morgan said the other night in Colorado

Springs, "*A denial that is only second-hand is beneath contempt.*"

This Bible, this church, this faith, this Christ—it is no new thing. It is something that has stood the test of centuries of human experience. *You and I are the novelties. The Bible, and our faith, and the church, and Christ—these are not on trial. It is you and I who are standing at the bar.* These things about which we toss off our flippant boastings of unbelief, they have been here for centuries. They have been tested in the lives of millions of human beings. You and I were only born day before yesterday. *We must give valid reasons for our unbelief. No mere second-hand denials can be accepted or respected.* The Bible has produced results that can be traced in the individual, in the political, the social and economic life of nations. Faith is demonstrating its power of lifting life every day. Jesus is the most dynamic figure in this world to-day. You must reckon with him. You must come to terms with him. And you must do it for yourself. *You dare not affront the intelligence and the faith of centuries with any mere second-hand denial.* If you have honest questions and difficulties of belief, I challenge you to search and see. If you will undertake the search, if you will never rest content with any

denial that is merely second-hand, if you will investigate for yourselves, then I will not fear the result of your investigation.

II

Let us look at this question from a little different angle. That which I have urged upon you concerning your denials is equally applicable to your positive beliefs. We all of us begin life with a faith that is second-hand. As children we believe what our fathers and mothers believe. One of the most vivid of my earlier recollections is that of the intensity of political feeling in Nebraska, where we were living, during the free-silver agitation. I remember the year that McKinley and Roosevelt were the candidates on the Republican ticket opposed by Bryan and Stevenson on the Democratic side. My father and grandfather were staunch Republicans. And so was I. All of the dry-goods stores had campaign hats for sale. One set had McKinley and Roosevelt just above the visor in letters of gold. The other had the names of Bryan and Stevenson in silver. The first fight that I can remember was started when another boy tried to force upon my head a cap bearing the name of the detested Democratic leaders. I didn't know anything at all about gold and silver coinage.

I would not have known the Democratic Party from the Republican Party if I had met them arm in arm upon the street. But I was ready to fight for my Republican principles—just as some of you are still, for your second-hand ideas.

Our first ideas about the Bible and about God and about the church and about Jesus are all second-hand. Our first faith is the faith that we inherit from our fathers. And right here I want to pause to ask a question. I want to ask the fathers and mothers who are here if they have stopped to think what kind of faith they are bequeathing to their boys and girls. My grandfather had a dream once that when he died he would like to have a farm to leave to each one of his grandchildren. I know many parents who are very seriously concerned about the amount of money that they will have to bequeath to their boys and girls. That is a commendable concern. But it is vastly more important what kind of faith your children shall inherit. What sort of religious atmosphere are you creating in your home? What sort of religious instruction do your children receive from you? What sort of an idea of the Bible will they have because of the attitude which they have seen you take?

We begin life with a *Second-Hand Faith*.

And that is quite as it should be. It is God's first avenue of approach to every human soul. *The tragedy of life arises from this fact: that all too many of us rest contented with this Second-Hand Faith all the days of our life.* When we are children we are content that father and mother shall provide our food, secure our shelter, give us our clothing, and protect us from harm. But the time comes when no longer we can maintain our self-respect if we continue in this state of dependence upon them for the necessities of life. And *the time ought to come when we will equally refuse to rest content with a faith that is second-hand.*

Every one of you who are here this morning has some sort of faith. You believe something about God. I venture to ask you, "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me?" Is your faith merely a *Second-Hand Faith*? It is better to have that kind of faith than none at all. But there is something infinitely better and more wonderful. That is to have a faith in God that is your own personal experience. You all believe somewhat in the church. Your very presence here in a meeting for public worship is evidence of that. But some of you have come to church, not because of any vital personal con-

victions, but more because it is the proper thing to do—it is what others do. I challenge you to think further. Has the church any real vital message for you? Have you found it indispensable in your life? Have you found a place in it where you can give yourself wholeheartedly in personal service? “Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me?”

You all have some sort of belief in the Bible. Again I charge you to search your hearts. Is this Bible *your* book, one that you have mastered and made your own—or is it only the book of the church, the book that the people whose opinions you respect highly esteem? Are you seeking to understand it better, to fathom the fascination with which it perennially enralls the imagination and the conscience of men, or are you content just to accept the judgment of others about it? “Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me?”

All of you have some sort of belief about Jesus. Where did you get it and what does it actually mean to you? Is he merely one that you have been taught to reverence and trust, one of whom most men speak in the highest praises, one whom it seems to be the fashion to honor, at least in word and outward form?

Or has he come to possess your very soul? Have you found Jesus yourself? Has he entered into your very life? Do you know him and love him as your all-sufficient Saviour? Do you revere him and obey him as sovereign Lord of all your life? "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me?" Is yours a *Second-Hand Faith* or have you made it your own?

It is no easy task to win a personal faith. Sometimes it means the keenest anguish of spirit and terrible wrestlings in the silent valleys of thought. Sometimes we become alarmed because young people question our beliefs and doubt our dogmas and grow impatient with our traditions. These are only growing pains of spiritual independence. *They are only casting off the second-hand garments of thought and refashioning out of the texture of their own budding experience new garments wherewith to clothe the faith that lifts their souls to God.* We should rejoice when young people begin to question. They are then beginning to search. "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart," said the prophet. No man who honestly, earnestly seeks for God will fail to find him.

I do not mean to say that the new faith

which we win for ourselves will necessarily be radically different from that which we inherited from our fathers. When we begin to clothe ourselves we still dress in the same general style of clothing used by our fathers and mothers. It is never necessary to dress like a freak from a sideshow in order to be original. But it is necessary that every man and woman should assume the responsibility for providing their own raiment. *And it is necessary that we shall ultimately think through these questions of faith for ourselves, that they shall become part of our own experience.* We dare not allow any priest to stand between us and God, whether that priest be a member of an official order of clergy or whether the priest be simply the memory of father and mother. Jesus would speak face to face with every man. "He calleth his own sheep by name."

I do not mean to say that the new faith which we win for ourselves will burst upon us in all its illuminating glory in any one blinding flash. There do come to many men and women moments of inspiration when, like Simon, they look up into the eyes of the Master and cry out in an ecstasy of spiritual discovery, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." But even after that moment of exaltation Simon had many a hard and bitter

lesson to learn ere his faith was utterly his own.

Israel did not conquer Canaan all in one spectacular campaign. There were long marches, bitter sieges, pitched battles, headlong flight, humiliating defeats, and generations of waiting before the final victory was theirs. It was only after the chosen people had lived in the land for centuries that they completely possessed it for their own. All the while they had the promise, the *Second-Hand Faith* which they had inherited from their fathers. And ultimately they made it their own. So we will have to live for years in intimate daily fellowship with God before we have completely possessed him for our own. We will have to spend years of our life in reverent study and in earnest effort to translate its precepts into living practice before we can hope to understand all that the Bible may mean to human life. It is only through a lifetime in the shadow of her gracious ministry, a lifetime of service seeking expression for the love of God and men which burns within us through the channels of her manifold activities, that we can come to know the church as she really is and has been through all the centuries. It is only as we walk in daily company with Christ, only as we

work together at common tasks, that he will perfectly reveal himself to us.

But, oh, my brethren, here is the glorious truth for which all that I have been saying is but an approach. *You can make this faith your own. God can become a vital personal experience in your daily life. The Bible can become for you a living book, feeding the springs of life with inexhaustible supplies. The church can become a glorious challenge commanding your utmost contribution of service. Jesus can become the one altogether lovely, the fairest among ten thousand. This faith which to-day is a second-hand experience can become verily your own, part of your very life. No more need you depend upon what others tell you about God and the church and the Bible and Jesus Christ. When you talk of God you can speak, like Jesus himself, not as the scribes, but as one who knows for himself.*

IX

CALLED TO BE SAINTS

"Called to be saints."

You and I dare not attempt to hide our own unwillingness to meet the demands of Jesus behind the thought that, of course, we are not saints but just average men and women. If we are not "saints" in the sense in which the apostle used that word, then we are not Christians at all.

IX

CALLED TO BE SAINTS

Rom. 1. 1-7

"Called to be saints."—*Rom. 1. 7.*

ONE day, as I was walking about in the city of Omaha, Nebraska, I discovered a building with a very imposing appearance. It was built in something of the form of a Greek temple with high granite columns and heavy overhanging cornice. There was no inscription anywhere that I could find to tell what sort of building it was. The door was open, however, and I went in to find out, if I could, just what it was. I had not much more than entered the door when a man came out to ask me what business I had in there. It was a Shrine temple, and, inasmuch as I do not belong to the Shrine, and consequently had no business inside the building, I very quickly took my departure.

As you and I go about this world and call ourselves Christians, we ever and anon meet up with someone who will ask us this same question that somewhat embarrassed me when I strayed into that Shrine temple in Omaha.

We are constantly facing this query: "Why are you a Christian?" "What is the purpose which you hope to achieve in following Jesus?" We must expect to face this query. And we must be ready to answer it.

I would like to suggest to you that in these words of Paul, which he uses in both his letter to the church in Rome and in his first letter to the Corinthians, we have his answer to this query. What does it mean to be a Christian? Why are we here? What business have you and I professing to be followers of Jesus? Answer: We are "called to be saints."

I

Right here, at the very beginning, let me enter a word of caution. We must be careful that we do not misunderstand the meaning of the apostle when he says that Christians are "called to be saints." I believe that I can see the picture that is at once called before your mind when you read those words. Sometimes, when we see or hear the word "saint," we think of a sour-visaged individual, rather untidily dressed. His brow is creased with a perennial frown. He is forever denouncing everything that brings pleasure to us as "worldly" and "of the devil." His idea of the sort of conduct that is proper is to sing doleful

psalms in an ultra sanctimonious tone, to inveigh against the sins of all whom we meet, and to derive whatever satisfaction is possible under such conditions by considering how terrible all other people are who have not been sanctified as we have been. Do you conjure up some sort of picture like that when you hear or see the word "saint" or "sanctified"?

Sometimes we have a vision of a much pleasanter sort of an individual. Perhaps we think of some dear old grandmother who sits serenely knitting in some sunny window corner, or some fine, sweet-spirited, venerable old gentleman who spends long hours peering through his iron-bowed spectacles and tracing out, with crooked, wavering fingers, the lines of his well-worn Bible. We think of someone who, in the tumult of the busy years, has forged a character of the finest gold, and now, in the quiet tranquillity of the twilight of life, waits patiently for the summons to everlasting bliss. Do you think of some such person as being the only kind of person who can fitly be called a "saint"? Is it not true that we are prone to define sanctity as a negative, or passive, virtue? We seldom think of it in aggressive, positive terms. Have you ever thought of associating this term with a business man wrestling with problems of finance and indus-

try? Have you ever thought of associating it with a housewife with the breakfast and dinner dishes stacked high in a kitchen sink, the week's ironing piled up in the corner, and the children setting the whole house in wild disorder? Have you ever thought of the possibility that it might be appropriate to apply this term to a sweating, smoke-blackened, grease-grimed toiler out here in the Bessemer steel mill? And yet Paul declared that Christians are "called to be saints."

II

Permit me to call your attention to four things about this text that may help us to understand it better.

(a) In the first place, the apostle uses this term, not only in these two letters where he expressly states that Christians are "called to be saints," but in practically every letter that he wrote as a word that is synonymous with the word "Christians." It is not a few particular individuals that he thus singles out. The name is given to everyone who professes to be a follower of Jesus. Now, it may very well be that the men and women who became Christians in that first century of grace were of a finer type than we who bear the name to-day. Sometimes we rather fondly like to

imagine that to be the case. We are always looking backward to a golden age. We like to talk of the degeneracy of our times. But the more I study the writings of this book, the more convinced I am that the men to whom Paul was writing would average up about as the men and women in Bethel Church, or any other of our Christian churches to-day. There were some magnificent examples of Godlikeness among them. There were some exceedingly unfortunate examples of backsliders among them. And there were a whole host of very average-lot followers of Jesus, just as there are in our own church to-day. And yet Paul addresses them all as "saints." The point that I want you to see is this, that, whatever Paul may have believed should be the character of "saints," he clearly meant by that word something which it would be proper to apply to every earnest and sincere follower of Jesus. *You and I dare not attempt to hide our own unwillingness to meet the demands of Jesus behind the thought that, of course, we are not saints but just average men and women. If we are not "saints" in the sense in which the apostle used that word, then we are not Christians at all. We are "called to be saints."*

(b) In the second place, let us observe that

the word "called" was a word that had a very particular meaning to the people to whom Paul was writing. Many of the cities of the Roman Empire had a large degree of self-government. In Rome itself, even after the ancient republic had given way to the absolutism of Augustus and Tiberius, the old republican forms were still observed. Public measures were adopted and public officials elected at an assembly of all the free citizens of the city. Whenever there was to be such a meeting, the town crier went up and down the streets "calling" the people together. The word that Paul uses here is the same word that was used to describe the town crier going his rounds. Christians were men and women who had been summoned, "called" together. Whenever the citizens of a Greek or Roman city were called together there was business to be transacted, something of urgent importance was to be done. The same is true of the followers of Jesus. *There is urgency about the business of Christ. There is something that must be done. There is nothing passive about this matter of being "saints."* We are "called to be saints."

(c) Then, in the third place, we need to trace back this very word "saint" a bit and discover just what it actually meant to the people to

whom it was addressed. It was a word that had both Jewish and pagan associations. And with both the meaning was the same. It comes very much as a surprise to us, with our customary way of defining "saint" and "sanctify," to discover that, originally, the word had no reference to the moral qualifications of that which was sanctified at all. Before we are done with it, we shall see how this moral quality came to be applied, and ultimately came to determine our definition of the term. But originally the meaning of "sanctify" was simply to set apart, to dedicate for a purpose. When it was used of religious observances, it meant to dedicate to the use of God. That which was sanctified was set apart for God's use and could be used for no other purpose. *A saint was a man or woman whose life was wholly dedicated to the service of God.* That was the original meaning of the word. And that meaning we must keep clear in our thinking if we are to understand Paul's use of the word.

(d) One further thing we need to notice concerning this text. That is, that never in the New Testament is the term "saint" applied to one individual alone. It is always used as a collective term. It is a characterization of the whole group of Christians, taken together.

There is a solidarity about the Christian community that cannot be broken up. This purpose for which the followers of Jesus are called together is something that cannot be attained by a single individual as a purely individual enterprise. It is something for which we must all work together. When the apostle declares that we are "called to be saints" he is saying that we followers of Jesus have been summoned by the Spirit of God to lives that are fully dedicated to the fulfillment of the purpose of God by working together with him for the accomplishment of his will. We cannot be "saints" in isolation. Our sanctification is a call to the consecration of all our lives to the common task of building the kingdom of God.

III

Perhaps we are now ready to attempt to understand what Paul meant when he addressed the churches in Rome and Corinth as men and women who were "called to be saints." And perhaps we are ready to appreciate how appropriate this term must be to every group of earnest followers of Jesus. *What does it mean to be a Christian? Does it not mean that you and I dedicate our lives, set them apart, for the one supreme purpose of serving God in the most effective possible way?*

Can it mean any less? Dare we take the name Christian if our consecration to Christ and to his cause is not complete? We have heard the call of God. Our hearts have responded to that call. We have banded together in this congregation here at Bethel Church because it is only in so uniting with others of like mind and purpose that we can most effectively serve God. We are "called to be saints."

Is there not a need for such dedication in every walk of life? Can you think of any place where a follower of Jesus may go where he will not have need to remember that he is one of those who are "called to be saints," who have dedicated their lives to work out the purposes of God? Do we not need such saints in business? men and women who will dedicate all their business ability, all of their skill in judging men, all of their training and experience to bringing the business life of the community under the reign of Christ? Do we not need such saints in shop and factory? What is more imperative at this hour than the call of God that men and women shall set their lives apart to put a new spirit into industry, the spirit of brotherhood and service, the spirit of Jesus? Do we not need such saints in the home? How else shall we undergird the civilization of to-morrow unless the character of

its boyhood and girlhood can be formed and fixed in the atmosphere of homes where Christ is King? Do we not need such saints in professional life, and in political circles, and in all of our social relationships? What did Paul mean by saying that we are all "called to be saints"? Was it not that we are all summoned to dedicate our whole life to the service of God? How dare we take the name of Christian unless that is the first principle of our consecration?

If that is what you and I mean, then we will make it the first concern of life that the will of God shall find as complete expression in our own lives as it is possible for it to find. We will never rest content until our lives reflect his own, until we are like him. That is where the element of moral excellence that has come to inhere in our definition of "saint" enters in. *If our lives are completely dedicated to God, they will become like his.* If we are living all our days in fellowship and cooperation with him at the common tasks of building a real kingdom of righteousness in all of our human relationships, we will ourselves become like him with whom we labor. *That is the privilege of every man and woman who sincerely follows Jesus, to produce as the ripened fruit of Christian experience a life that is genuinely*

Godlike. And this is the essence of our Christian profession, that we acknowledge that as our goal. We hear the call of the Spirit of God. We now and forever more dedicate our life to his service. We make it the supreme business of our life to do his will. We strive without ceasing for ever more complete harmony of life and purpose with him. We are "called to be saints."

"O Jesus, I have promised
To serve thee to the end;
Be thou forever near me,
My Master and my Friend:
I shall not fear the battle
If thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If thou wilt be my Guide.

"O let me feel thee near me:
The world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
The tempting sounds I hear;
My foes are ever near me,
Around me and within;
But, Jesus, draw thou nearer,
And shield my soul from sin.

"O Jesus, thou hast promised
To all who follow thee,
That where thou art in glory
There shall thy servant be;
And, Jesus, I have promised
To serve thee to the end;
O give me grace to follow,
My Master and my Friend."

—JOHN E. BODE.

X

COPYBOOKS

"Copy me as I copy Christ."

This is the one and only reason for our existence as a church; nay, it is the only satisfactory answer that any of us can give to men or God why we should be alive in this good earth: It is that we may copy Christ.

X

COPYBOOKS

"Copy me as I copy Christ."—1 Cor. 11. 1.¹

Do you remember the days when you used "copybooks" in school? At the top of each page there was a line printed in script as a model. Usually it was some proverb or pithy saying, or some interesting bit of information. Under that bit of writing, put there as a model, were a number of blank lines on which we were to copy the first line, making it as nearly like the original as possible. Do you remember that nearly always the last line on the page was the poorest? It was farthest away from the copy.

Then there came a time when we did not have regular copybooks. The teacher wrote a line on the blackboard and we copied that line on blank sheets of paper. Later on, when I taught school for a while, I discovered that the line that the teacher wrote was itself a copy. The teacher had the perfect example in a book that she was following as a guide in teaching the class. She looked at this model and then

¹Moffatt, *The New Testament, A New Translation*.

copied it on the blackboard as a model for the class. Then she said to the class, "You copy the model I have set before you, as I have copied the model set before me." Let us read again the words of our text. Paul is writing to his friends in Corinth, friends who have no other way of knowing Jesus except as someone who has known him personally can make clear to them what kind of Person he was: "You copy me as I copy Christ."

My earliest boyhood hero was my grandfather. There wasn't anything that grandfather couldn't do. The miracles in the way of windmills and weathervanes and little boats and similar articles that he would create with his pocketknife and odd scraps of wood were marvels at which I never ceased to wonder. My grandfather was a man of consequence in the little town where he lived. He was one of the directors of the bank. He did not have to stop at the little grilled window, where the ordinary folk must wait in patience until they could be served. He would boldly push open the door that led in behind the counter and talk in familiar terms with the august personages that dwelt back there. My greatest happiness was to be in his company. In every possible way I tried to do everything just as grandfather did. He was constantly getting

queer notions about health and diet. I remember there was a period of a few years when he thought it was harmful to drink anything during a meal. He would not take even a small sip of water. And neither would I. No matter how dry and parched my throat seemed to get. No matter how difficult it became to swallow. Not a drop of water would I drink at the table as long as grandfather felt that that was the proper thing to do. My highest ambition was to grow up to be the kind of a man that grandfather was. A good many years have passed since then. Grandfather has gone on up the road and around the corner out of sight for a while. But I still feel that if I can write as fair a copy in my copy-book as he wrote in his, if my name can become as worthy of respect as his was worthily respected half way across this continent, and through all the eighty years of his life, I shall be well content. Paul was saying to his friends in Corinth: "You copy me as I copy Christ."

I

There was nothing egotistical about Paul when he wrote those words. Probably he had never been thinking less of himself in his life than when he wrote them. He was simply see-

ing more clearly than he had ever seen before the only way in which the folk he had come to love so well in that far-away Greek city could ever attain unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Sometimes we speak of a work of art as a "creation." And it is true that in the painting of a great picture, the composition of a musical masterpiece, the writing of a poem, the carving of an object of perennial beauty out of marble, the building of a cathedral, men do come nearer to actual creation than in any other form of human activity. Yet *the noblest art is only a process of copying the handiwork of God*. Raphael one day was passing through a crowded city street when he came upon a young mother seated in a doorway holding in her arms her first-born babe. The artist's eye beheld a vision of radiant beauty. He picked up a barrel head that some merchant had carelessly cast aside in the gutter and sketched thereon the outlines of one of his most beautiful Madonnas. Dickens spent many a night in prowling about the crowded quarters of London's slums. All night long he would tramp the streets intent on seeing men and women. Coming homeward in the early gray of morning twilight his mind was teeming with those inimitable character studies that

set all the English-speaking world to laughing and crying with him. His art was but his skill to copy the handiwork of God. If we should ever visit Europe, one of the objects of our visit would be to go to some of the great Gothic cathedrals. In the temples, the product, not of years or of generations, but literally of centuries, the connoisseurs of art tell us, were produced "the most perfectly logical and structurally expressive of all architectural styles."² And the tall, slender columns, the lofty groined arches, the traceried windows of these cathedrals are but copies of the vast forests that once covered all northern Europe. Every motif in this type of architecture is drawn from field and flower and forest. Beethoven wandered bareheaded all night in a raging tempest to capture the cadences of the tumult of the heavens for his score. Joyce Kilmer sang:

"Poems are made by fools like me;
But only God can make a tree."³

The highest genius that the human race has ever produced has found its supreme achievement in copying the handiwork of God. We humble folk, who in our building and our writ-

² *New International Encyclopædia*. Used by permission of Dodd, Mead and Company, publishers.

³ From *Trees and Other Poems*, by Joyce Kilmer. Copyright, 1914, George H. Doran Company, publishers.

ing, and in our clumsy attempts to draw or carve, stumble along in the footsteps of the great masters, *we simply copy them who, with consummate art, have copied God.*

This is a principle that is by no means confined to the canons of art. It runs through all forms of human endeavor. It is great to write a poem. It is great to paint a masterpiece. It is great to build a vast cathedral that shall stand for centuries. *But the greatest task that any man or woman ever undertook is the task of building a life that is worthy and true.*

Some men clear the pathways for the caravans of trade,
Some men fashion new machines and tools for human
aid,

Some men build great cities with their towers of stone
and steel,

Some men chain the lightnings to Labor's flying wheel,

Some men turn their genius to devising juster laws,

Some men live for vanity and popular applause;

But there is no task that challenges the soul that lives
within

Like the building of new traits of nobleness in living men.

In the building of a life, just as in the building of a cathedral, our task is to copy the image of Him who is our model. Long ago it was written that in the beginning "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." Throughout all the centuries the highest compliment that man has ever paid to mortal man has been to say of

some great hero that he was godlike in his character. To-day the thought of men is turning with ever-growing unanimity toward that one matchless figure to describe whom we have never found any terminology adequate except to take him at his word and say, "He is the Son of God." "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." The thought of men is turning to Jesus with an ever-deepening conviction that if only men and women could become like Jesus in character and life, then sin and suffering would disappear.

Did you ever ponder over the meaning of the doctrine of the incarnation? Many centuries ago a learned scholar wrote a book called, *Cur Deus Homo?—Why Did God Become Man?* And from the time of Anselm down to to-day theologians and philosophers have been trying to explain the life of Jesus. To me it is very simple. It is simply this: The heavenly Father was lonely for his wandering children. They had forgotten him. They had strangely distorted ideas about him. They had conceived very wrong notions about the kind of life they ought to live. And the Father wished to teach them, in the most effective way possible, just what God is like and just what men and women ought to be. God knew that the most effective way to teach great

moral and spiritual truth is by concrete illustration. He knew that the only way in which men and women could ever come to understand just what they might become if they only would, was for someone who could to come and show them a copy of what they ought to be. Jesus came and did that very thing. From that day down to this *the process of character-building is a process of copying Christ.*

Through all of our religious life this thought must run: That, in all things, we shall write as fair as possible a copy of our Christ. That is why we have a Sunday school. Was not Jesus first of all a teacher to all who were eager to learn? That is why we build hospitals and train physicians and nurses, and offer the best that medical science affords to all who are in need. For Jesus never wearied with the demands of human need. All day long and far into the dusk of evening he waited while they came that he might lay his hands on them and heal them. That is why the Christian conscience of the nation has risen to cast out the saloon and is rising to banish war from the comity of nations. Jesus was the implacable enemy of everything that destroys human life, that debases the human spirit, that breeds suffering and misery for men and women and

little children. That is why we have a prayer meeting. We cannot forget that Jesus, who seems to us so infinitely strong, felt intensely the need for seasons of quiet meditation and prayer. That is why we exalt the home ties and hold them sacred above all other human bonds. For Jesus said that the family relationship at its best is the nearest thing on earth to heaven and God. *This is the one and only reason for our existence here as a church; nay, it is the only satisfactory answer that any of us can give to men or God why we should be alive in this good earth: It is that we may copy Christ.*

II

There is one other thing our text suggests that I would like to suggest to you. Paul knew that for those friends of his in Corinth the nearest to a vision of Christ that they had ever seen was in his own life among them. It was a part of the joy that thrilled his every moment that while he had lived with them those eighteen months they had caught from him some glimmering of what Christ must be like. He had patiently written as fair a copy of his Lord as he could scrawl before them. And they had caught the vision and had begun to copy too. And it was a part of the solemn

sense of terrible responsibility that kept him humble all his days to think that they would possibly never have any better model to copy from than his own poor copy of Christ. "Ye copy me as I copy Christ."

One day, when Jesus was very near the end of his ministry, some Greeks who had become converted Jews, and who had come to Jerusalem to attend the Passover feast, came to Philip. Their request was very simple: "Sir, we would see Jesus." To-day from every quarter where men and women are conscious of their misery, where hearts are hungry and where souls are perishing, comes to us the eager cry, "Sirs, we would see Jesus." The whole world is looking for a model that it may copy in its copybook. We who know him even but imperfectly know that there is no model for human copybooks like unto our Master, Jesus Christ. We must write our copy as a model for the world to copy after. There are hundreds of men and women right here in East Pueblo who will never see any fairer copy of Christ than the copy that you and I shall set before them. This is the thought that I would like to lay upon your hearts this morning. Are we daily writing such a fair copy of our Lord that we can say with Paul, "Copy me as I copy Christ"?

Perhaps we are tempted at first thought to disclaim any such audacity. What are we that we should set up for examples for other men to follow? But that is not the point, my friends. *It is not for us to choose whether we shall become copies for other folk or not. Whether we will or no we are.* If I have understood the apostle Paul at all, I am confident that if he could have had it otherwise he would have pointed the Corinthians to a better copy for their copybooks. He was simply facing one of the unalterable conditions of human association.

One day, several weeks ago, I was reading something out loud at home. I was standing up, and, as I read, I fell to walking around the room. I held the book or paper from which I was reading in one hand and let the other swing loosely at my side as I walked around and around the room in and out among the chairs. After I had been doing that for a little while Mrs. Schofield stopped me and told me to look around. And there came Mary Lea, walking just as I was walking, holding a cracker up in one hand, letting the other swing just as I was doing, and jabbering away with all her might. She was simply copying daddy, that was all. We laughed about it then. But I have pondered that a good deal since. If

she copied me in that, she will be copying me in other things. It will not help to try to tell her that there are many far better copies than my poor scrawl for her to follow. She will still copy me. *And there is only one thing that I can do. That is to set before her the fairest copy that I can.*

O men and women, you who are fathers and mothers, what kind of copies are you setting before your boys and girls? And you, big brothers and big sisters, what kind of a copy are you writing? And all of you who have neighbors and business associates, and friends and chums, what kind of a copy of Christ are you writing? O men and women of Bethel Church, may God help us all to set so fair a copy of our Lord in all our worship and in our fellowship that we can be truly and humbly glad to know that other folk will copy us as we have copied Christ.

XI

THE CHURCH IN THY HOUSE

"The church in thy house."

The love that is the only foundation upon which a home can be safely built is in its essence self-forgetfulness. Such love cannot be learned anywhere except in company with Jesus Christ. "We love, because he first loved us."

XI

THE CHURCH IN THY HOUSE

Philemon 2

"The church in thy house."—*Philem. 2.*

PAUL is writing a personal letter to his friend Philemon. In the salutation, at the beginning of the letter, he greets the more prominent members of the household by name. There is Philemon; Apphia, his good wife; and Archippus, the eldest, and perhaps the only, son. Then the apostle gathers them all up, including any other members of the household that may have not been mentioned by name, in the beautiful phrase, "The church in thy house."

One I cannot think of a more fitting description of a Christian home than this: "The church in thy house." *A dwelling place so sanctified by the character of its inmates and their habits of life that it is at once thought of as a place of worship; a family group so knit together, not alone by ties of blood kinship, but by the more subtle and yet more lasting bonds of common faith, that it becomes, by the very nature of its common life, a church: what better description can we find of an ideal home?*

I

How the dearest and most precious associations of life cluster around the thought of home! How, through the constantly growing numbers of the years, memory glorifies that sacred shrine! Born of our holiest passions, spring of our noblest ambitions, the name of "home" is the magic wand that calls up life's sweetest and dearest memories, that stirs into new life our highest purposes. Days of childhood's artless happiness, days of youth's golden dreaming, the inspiration of all high endeavor, days hallowed by love that abides through all the disillusioning years—what artist's brush can ever paint the picture of that holy place! What poet's tongue can ever catch the cadences of its celestial music!

Did you ever have occasion to watch a young man starting out in life for himself? At first he may appear to be thoughtless and carefree. He likes a good time with congenial companions. He may live cleanly and work honestly. But his life seems to have no more serious purpose than to take all of the enjoyment that each day brings, with little thought about tomorrow. Then, one day, we begin to notice a change in his mode of life. His erstwhile companions begin to miss him in their revels. The

bank teller informs us that he has opened a savings account. His employer begins to observe that he is applying himself with greater diligence to his work and marks him for early promotion. One day we learn that he has purchased a little plot of real estate. Anon we pass that way and carpenters are busy building a new house. We catch our friend haunting the furniture stores. Soon the secret is out. A new and glorious motive has come to rule his life. He has learned the truth of that line of Edgar Guest's: "The soul that is the gladdest is the soul that builds a home."¹

It has become a truism to say that the home is the foundation of society. And yet, it is a truism that we, in our American life, seem in danger of forgetting. It would be well for us to ponder the warning of the late Theodore Roosevelt: "When home ties are loosened, when men and women cease to regard a worthy family life, with all its duties fully performed, and all of its responsibilities lived up to, as the life best worth living, then evil days for the commonwealth are at hand."² After describing the simple home life of the humble Scot, in "The Cotter's Saturday Night," Robert Burns exclaims:

¹From "Home Builders," in *Just Folks*. Reprinted by permission of the publishers, Reilly & Lee Company.

²Quoted in *Omaha Daily News*, October 27, 1921.

"From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad."

If we would realize the hope of the framers of our national Constitution, to "secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and to our posterity," we must lay strong and sure the foundations of the home.

II

One of the most beautiful buildings in the city of Boston is what is known as the "new Old South Church," on Copley Square. About the time that I first went to Boston the whole city was alarmed by the announcement that the magnificent tower of this church had settled so much on one side that there was danger of its falling. A new subway that had been constructed underneath the building had undermined the foundations and the whole superstructure was imperiled. The same thing is true of our American institutions and our Christian civilization. If we permit the foundation of that civilization, the Christian home, to be undermined, we cannot expect the superstructure long to endure. The best engineers available were called into consultation and the weakened foundation so strengthened that the disaster to the church was prevented. If the foundations of our Christian civilization are

being weakened, surely we ought immediately to set about strengthening them.

I am sure that I do not need to tell you that there are forces at work in our modern life that are undermining the Christian home life of America. We have become so accustomed to quotations of statistics about divorce that they almost cease to excite our interest. We listen to such a statement as that made by Judge Lindsey that in Denver, in 1922, for every two marriage licenses issued, one divorce petition was filed; and that for every home created by marriage another was broken by a separation. We have a kind of temporary emotional spasm for fear and dismay. Then we make some inane remark about "How terrible it is!" and "Whatever is going to become of us?" and dismiss the whole matter from our thinking while we turn to the market reports or the society column or the sporting page. Perhaps it will bring the problem home to us a little more forcibly if we realize that every year nearly one hundred thousand boys and girls have their homes broken up by the separation of their parents. Plainly, something is undermining the institution of the home.

When we seek to locate the cause of this social disintegration we discover that its name is legion. It ought to be evident to everyone

who reads and thinks that the remedy for this evil will not be found in any new code of divorce regulations. The heart of the difficulty lies in the attitude that people take toward the home and the whole marriage relation. Too many of us are inclined to place too much emphasis upon individual freedom, to yield to impulse and transient moods or desires. We are too reluctant to recognize the burden of responsibility. Obligation of any kind is irksome. We are all of us more or less guilty of trying to evade the sober responsibilities that all worthy living inevitably lays upon us. We devour greedily the comic supplements and jokesters' columns that abound in jesting that makes marriage a subject of mockery and purity of life a matter of derision. *What we need is a new public conscience that will not tolerate such ribald slanders.* During the Great War I knew of one man who was mobbed by a crowd of indignant citizens because he used a bit of torn and faded red, white and blue bunting to wipe the grease from his fingers one day in his garage. The flag is a sacred symbol. We will not tolerate any sort of disrespect to it. My friends, *we ought to be equally indignant at anyone who in idle or malicious jest befouls the sacred name of home. Marriage is too sacred a thing*

to be made the subject of thoughtless jest. Before the outer acts of society are cleansed the inner thinking of men and women must be made pure.

Commercialized amusements have added their greed for gold to the other forces that seek to undermine the home life. One example will serve to illustrate. About five years ago one of the leading moving picture producers issued a full-page advertisement that appeared in many of the high-grade monthly and weekly periodicals of this country. I saw it in what is probably the most widely read high-grade monthly magazine that finds its way into our American homes. This advertisement featured this legend in large-size capital letters: "You can stay at home any night. There's a better place than home when its [such and such] Picture night."

Now, I do not know what you think of an advertisement like that. But I want to tell you what I think about it. I think that statement was an affront to every decent, self-respecting, home-loving man and woman in this land. I want to brand that statement as a deliberate and infamous lie. *There is never any better place than home anywhere or any time. And if the time ever comes in your life and mine when there is anywhere any place*

that is better than home, then may God have mercy on our souls!

III

These are some of the forces that are undermining the foundations of the American home. If we prize this sacred heritage, if we earnestly desire to preserve this institution that has meant so much to us and to our civilization, we must resolutely set ourselves the task of strengthening that institution. And if we are intelligently to go about that task, we must do a little clear thinking about it. I want to challenge you this morning to raise the question in your minds, What constitutes a home?

Whenever we think of home most of us think of some particular locality, some house, every stick and stone of which has been hallowed by sacred memories. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, recalls some peculiarly colored stones in the garden walk and a cluster of "Star of Bethlehem" flowers that he always thought of when he thought of home.

Yet, when we stop to think about it, it is neither the house, nor the locality, nor any particular things that make a home. Storms may destroy the dwelling house. Circumstances may make it necessary to move from

one locality to another. Every material thing that we possess may be lost. But *home only becomes the more real because of the calamity.* It is not *things* that make a home. It is, rather, the sense of having things together. *It is the community of interest that is more than any mere material possession.* It is in the fusion of our common hopes and dreams, our common toil and anxiety, our common disappointments and successes, our common sorrows and happiness, that home becomes a real and living thing in our experience. It is having things together that makes a home.

The individuals that make up a family circle are usually knit together by ties of blood kinship. And yet it is something more than any physical relationship that makes a home. The bitterest feuds that have ever separated men and desolated communities and nations have been family feuds. Some of the closest bonds of fellowship have been between individuals that had no blood relationship at all. *It is not physical relation but spiritual kinship that creates a home. Home is a community of interest that is created by a great abiding love.*

There is one thing more that we must put into our definition of a home. *If that love be genuine, it will inspire the individuals in the group to mutual sacrifice.* Long ago Paul de-

finest one of the facets on the jewel of love in the words: "Love seeketh not her own." And John Oxenham has set this truth to music:

"Love ever gives—
 Forgives—outlives—
 And ever stands
 With open hands,
 And, while it lives,
 It gives.
 For this is love's prerogative—
 To give—and give—and give."⁴

I do not know anywhere any finer definition of a home than just these words.

IV

We have defined home as a community of interest that is created by a love that is deep enough for mutual sacrifice. If this be true, is it not apparent that every real home must have a Christian foundation? There is no other basis for a real community of interest outside of the self-forgetfulness that Jesus taught and so beautifully exemplified. The essence of paganism is selfishness. You can investigate any instance of a broken home that you may choose. And, in every case, somewhere, at the bottom of the trouble, you will find selfishness. The trouble with the attitude that so many people take toward marriage to-

⁴From *The Vision Splendid*, by John Oxenham. Copyright, 1917, by George H. Doran Company, publishers.

day is this. Love to them means only selfish sensual or emotional gratification, or a convenient economic arrangement. But *the love that is the only foundation upon which a home can be safely built is in its essence self-forgetfulness. Such love cannot be learned anywhere except in company with Jesus Christ. "We love, because he first loved us."*

It is significant that there are many languages in the non-Christian lands that do not even have a word for "home." The nearest word in the Chinese language is a word that means literally "a pig under a roof." It is only as the people of these lands come to know Jesus that they begin to get a glimmer of an understanding of what "home" means. We can continue to have homes, here in America, only as we enthrone, in all of the relationships of life, the spirit of Jesus. Our homes must become that which the home of Philemon was, "the church in thy house."

That means that there must be ■ genuine repentance in your heart and mine, and an honest confession of our sins to Almighty God. It means that we must resolutely set ourselves to face the responsibilities of home-building. It means that we must establish in our homes the "Family Altar." It means that religious worship, the reading of the Word, and common

prayer, must become an integral part of all of our home life. It means that we must seek through all of the relationships within our family circles to create such an atmosphere of genuinely Christian love and good will that our homes shall become in truth that which Philemon's was, "the church in thy house."

In the poem of "The Holy Grail" Tennyson tells of how the old knight, Sir Percival, described the day that Arthur's knights all took the oath to go and seek the Holy Grail. They were all assembled about the famous "table round" when

"All at once, as there we sat, we heard
 A crackling and a riving of the roofs,
 And rending, and a blast, and overhead
 Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
 And in the blast there smote along the hall
 A beam of light seven times more clear than day;
 And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
 All over covered with a luminous cloud,
 And none might see who bare it, and it passed.
 But every knight beheld his fellow's face
 As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
 And staring each at other like dumb men
 Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.
 I sware a vow before them all, that I
 Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride

Until I found and saw it, . . . and Galahad sware
 the vow.

And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin, sware,
 And Lancelot sware, and many among the knights."

So, to us all, has come the vision of our Holy Grail. Perhaps it was in the memories of mother and father and childhood days. Perhaps it was in the golden dreams of youthful fancy we had our vision of home as it ought to be. And perhaps for some of us that vision is yet unrealized. Perhaps the after years have been years of disillusionment. Perhaps we only stand upon the threshold of that high adventure.

My friends, this morning, I would like to challenge you to take with me this solemn vow that, henceforth, through all the days and years, we will make it the supreme purpose of our lives to make our homes true Christian homes, "the church in thy house."

XII

THE HOUSE OF GOD

"This is none other but the house of God, . . . the gate of heaven."

Here is the place where the church confronts her high and holy task. The church is the instrument through which the love of God becomes articulate in speaking to the lonely hearts of men. The church is the agency through which the love of God can find expression in drawing all the wandering children of men into the everlasting home. The church is *The House of God*.

XII

THE HOUSE OF GOD

Rev. 21. 1-7; Isa. 2. 2-4; Gen. 28. 17

"This is none other but the house of God, . . . the gate of heaven."—*Gen. 28. 17.*

LATE one afternoon some years ago I was driving along one of the main highways in a neighboring State. The sun was just setting in the west as I topped a hill and came in sight of a town of considerable size. Part of the town had scrambled up and over a hilltop. Part of it lay sprawling in the valley at its foot. There before me it was silhouetted in gray and brown against the scarlet and crimson of the sunset sky.

Up on the very summit of the hill I saw the huge, square, massive outlines of a new high-school building. I thought of the hundreds of boys and girls who climbed that hill each morning, opening their minds to each day's measure of new truth. I thought of the patient, sympathetic, loyal teachers, who day by day were giving of their best to these young lives committed to their care. Down in the bottom of the valley, close by the river that ran

through the town, I saw a tall smokestack pouring out a cloud of black coal smoke. I thought of the toiling men whose shoulders were bending beneath heavy loads. I thought of work and weariness and the relentless struggle for daily bread. Half way up the hill I saw the outline of the dome of a majestic courthouse—for the town was a county seat. I thought of justice, of grave-visaged judges seated on the bench; of keen-minded lawyers wrestling in intellectual combat in the arena of the courtroom. I thought of lives caught in the toils of crime, of hearts that were broken by disobedience and sin. I thought of America and all that our democracy means to each of us. From a hundred chimneys I saw little wisps of pale-gray smoke rising lazily through the trees in the still evening air. Little happy lights began to twinkle in and out. I thought of homes, of rollicking children, of weary men coming home with glad hearts and eager faces, of the love light shining in the eyes of women standing in the doorways with open arms. Rising high above the trees, in the very heart of the town, I saw a great, tall spire, pointing its finger toward the stars. *And I thought of God.*

That is as it should be. As Bishop Quayle once put it, "As far as a church building can be seen it should remind men of God." That

is the only reason that we build it. That is its only reason for existing. There it stands, somewhere in the center of the life of the community, to help men think of God.

I

I want you to ponder with me, this morning, that phrase that came spontaneously to Jacob's lips the morning after the night of vision. "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." What do men and women think of when they come to worship with us here? Do they sense anything apart from their immediate surroundings—the size and shape of the room, the color of the walls, the harmony or discord in the music, the features of their companions in the pews? Do folks think only of this? Or do folks think of God? Is there something about the quality of our worship, something in the spirit of the lives that gather here, that sets new canticles of heavenly music singing in the human hearts that worship within these walls? Do men go forth to whisper to their hearts in hushed exaltation of soul, Surely "this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven"? What do we mean when we speak of the church as "the house of God"?

Whenever we think of home we always think

of some particular place. We think of some particular house, some lot or farmstead. We think of familiar prints in the faded wall-paper, of pictures hanging in well-remembered places. We think of odors, musty sweet—the rich fragrance of new-turned soil, the sweet aroma of new-mown hay, the haunting perfume of a garden of old-fashioned flowers. We think of sounds that come back to us rich with the overtones of memory—the livestock at feeding time in the farmyard, the whisper of the leaves in the friendly tree outside our childhood's bedroom window, the noisy bustle of household preparations, the ceaseless rumble of a city's streets, the quiet of long Sabbath afternoons. We always think of some such concrete things as these whenever we think of home.

And yet we know that none of these, nor all of them together, really make a home.

"Home ain't a place that gold can buy and get up in
a minute,

Afore it's home there's got to be a heap of living in it.

Ye've got to sing and dance for years, ye've got to romp
and play

And learn to love the things ye have by using them
each day.

Ye've got to love each brick and stone from cellar up
to dome.

It takes a heap of living in a house to make it home."

¹"Home" by Edgar Guest, in *Making the House a Home*. Reilly & Lee Co., publishers. Reprinted by permission.

That is Eddy Guest's whimsical way of saying that the house in which we live, and *all the other material things that go to make up the structure of our picture of a home, these are not really even a part of the real home at all. It is love and life together and laughter and tears that makes a home.* These material things, these houses and chairs and pictures and gardens and trees, these are just the instruments through which love finds expression in the building of a home.

The same thing is true about the house of God. Whenever we think of the church we usually think of some particular building in which we some time have worshiped. The first church building that I remember was a small white frame building in a little county seat town in Nebraska. There were two aisles and three rows of seats. At the back was a small room that was cut off from the main room by high folding doors, covered with dark-green felt. In the little room the primary children met. The church was warmed by old-fashioned round iron stoves. One of these stood at the front in the corner just at the left of the pulpit. It was in this corner that the Bible class met which my father and mother attended. From that safe haven of refuge by mother's side, down the long aisle to the formidable

green doors at the rear was a long and fearful journey for my little feet to travel. That was my first pilgrimage of grace. Here I first went to Sunday school. Here I was initiated into the mysteries of a Christmas Tree, and dialogues and recitations. Here I first tasted the joys of a Sunday-school library. Here I first publicly confessed my desire to be a follower of Christ. The first money that I ever gave to a church I earned and gave to the fund for building the new church that has replaced that dear old house of God. Whenever I think of a church I always see the outlines of that long-vanished place of worship, that first was church to me.

And yet I know that *it was not the particular form or the material of which the building was constructed that made that church a house of God. It was the fact that in some way, through the ministry of the congregation meeting in that house, there came into my boyish heart a consciousness of the presence of the Unseen One.* The building in which that people met, and all that went to make up their fellowship, became an instrument through which the Spirit of God could speak to me. And my soul responded, as did Jacob on the mount of vision, "This is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven."

II

There are two factors in the situation in which we find ourselves as we face our responsibilities as members of a church. On the one hand there are men and women and boys and girls in this community who have not found God. Their lives are empty, lonely, filled with dissatisfaction and discontent, because they have not found God. There are men and women who have found life hard. Their hearts have grown bitter and hard in turn. They have never learned the secret of making every experience pay tribute to the spiritual venture of the soul. There are men and women who are fighting a losing fight. One by one the defenses that they have tried to erect around their high ideals are being beaten down. They have drained the last atom of their spiritual resources. They are whipped in spirit and ready to surrender. They have never discovered the Unseen Comrade who, through the thickest and most hard-fought battles, fights always by the side of him who fights for right.

There are boys and girls who have been caught in the swirling flood of awakening passion and appetite. They are letting loose their moorings and drifting with the flotsam and

jetsam of human wreckage on to the reefs of everlasting woe. There are restless, dissatisfied folk with hunger-tortured souls. They are always seeking, never finding, never knowing clearly what they seek; like

"An infant crying in the night,
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry."³

They have never heard the voice of Jesus saying, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water . . . shall become in him a well of living water springing up unto eternal life." There are lost souls, bewildered souls, baffled and beaten souls, restless, eager souls, haunted, hunted souls. In every home in this community there are men and women and boys and girls the deepest need of whose life is to know more of God.

That is one factor in the situation—men and women who have not found their way to God. The other factor is God forever going out to search for men. That is the heart of the gospel message. That is what makes the gospel "good news." It is the proclamation of the infinite love and compassion of a Father forever seeking to find his lost sons and daughters—the tireless Shepherd clambering over the

³Tennyson, "In Memoriam," LIV.

rocky fastnesses in search of the last, least, lost sheep. And here is the place where the church confronts her high and holy task. The church is the instrument through which the love of God becomes articulate in speaking to the lonely hearts of men. The church is the agency through which the love of God can find expression in drawing all the wandering children of men into the everlasting home. The church is *The House of God*.

It seems a very simple thing to say that the task of the church is to be *The House of God*. But let us think again. A house by itself is meaningless. A house gains meaning and value by that which it shelters, by the purpose for which it is used. There is nothing in all the world more desolate than a deserted house. I lived for a year in a town in New Hampshire where half the houses were deserted and falling into ruin. The very air was burdened with a pall of gloom and hopelessness. A house is just an instrument through which love can find expression in the building of a home. Do you not see a new significance in the phrase, "the house of God"? *The church will find itself only as it becomes the instrument through which the love of God can find expression in the building for all the human family an everlasting home.*

Our task becomes as wide, then, as the purposes of God. Wherever there are hearts that are broken by sorrow, there is work for the church. For there the Spirit of God is seeking to bring comfort and peace. Wherever men and women battle manfully for righteousness, there is work for the church. For there God stands with flaming sword fighting for righteousness and seeking a more complete expression of his will. Wherever there are boys and girls with minds opening to the truth like flowers opening to the morning sun, there is a high call to the church to present the Living Word. For there the Spirit of God is seeking a medium for the revelation of his will. Wherever life stands trembling with the consciousness of unleashed powers, unharnessed capabilities, there God summons his church to offer in his name the discipline of high ideals, and the reins of pure and holy purpose with which young men and women may harness to worthy tasks the untamed steeds of passion and desire. Wherever there are nations and peoples rising in new consciousness of undreamed-of powers to throw off the shackles of old superstitions and outworn tyrannies, there God sends his church to lay foundations for new commonwealths of God. Wherever men and women are living for ignoble ends, for

self and greed and lust and avarice, there must the church be found challenging their souls to higher, worthier living. For there God always waits to ransom and redeem.

Our task is to be the hands and feet and voice of God. Wherever God would go, there we must be. Whatever God would say, that we must speak. Until the "Mountain of the house of God shall be established on the top of the mountains and all nations shall flow unto it." Until all the many voices of the community shall unite in chanting this doxology, "This is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven."

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